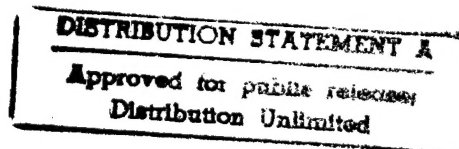


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JPRS-NEA-85-143

2 December 1985

Near East/South Asia Report



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4 December 1985

NEAR EAST/SOUTH ASIA REPORT

"BEFORE THE FALL"

Cairo QABL AL-SUQUT in Arabic 1985 (signed to press 19 Jan 85)
pp 1-190

[Book "Before the Fall" by Dr Faraj Fudah, Dar al-Kutub file
number 85/3244, 190 pages]

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[Text] Prologue

Being on one side of an issue against everybody else does not concern or worry me at all. I would not grieve if people were to raise their voices against me or brandish their swords at me. I would become neither sad nor apprehensive if those who believe in what I say were to forsake me. Nor would I be terrified if I were to be attacked by those who are terrified by what I say. But I would be extremely disturbed if what I have to say here does not reach those it was intended to reach: the people who have opinions [on the things that happen], not the power brokers; the people who champion principles, not the professional outbidders; the truth seekers, not the power seekers; the people who support wisdom, not those who love power. I am addressing the future of Egypt before addressing its present, and I am appealing to Egypt's psyche not to its nerves. I do not expect my friends or the party I took part in founding to agree with what I think. But I do believe in what I write, and I believe that I must write what I am writing. I believe it would be dangerous not to do so. In doing so my purpose is to serve God as well as the country.

Cairo, 19 January 1985

Chapter One: Intentions and Ignorance

"I will not fight until you bring me a sword that can see, speak and distinguish between believers and non-believers." Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas

1. Ignorance of Purpose

Which one of us does not recall Hafiz Ibrahim's well-known poem, "Al-Qasidah al-'Umariyah" in which the poet states: "The truth he spoke became an adage used by one generation after another: You assured your security and you were able to sleep peacefully and soundly when you established justice among people."

It is well-known that the person who is being referred to as the man who spoke the truth is al-Hurmuzan, a Persian leader; and, it is also well-known that the person who is the subject of these lines is 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. The statement that is being referred to in the poem is a poetic rendition of a well-known pithy expression about 'Umar: "You were just; you became secure; and you were able to sleep." This statement was made about 'Umar when he was seen sleeping under the shade of a tree. No guards were around to protect him; only divine care and the affection of his subjects protected him.

The reader may agree with me that the particulars of the foregoing story provide a splendid example of the justice that would lead to security and the security that would lead to safety. The story illustrates what a just ruler should be like. But, as people say, things are never perfect. The other side of the story that we have to remind the reader of is that 'Umar himself was murdered by Fayruz, a Magian youth, who was known as Abu Lu'lu'ah. 'Umar was killed in a mosque where the youth, who had waylaid him, stabbed him as he turned around to begin his prayers at dawn. The life of the great caliph came to an end, and so did his justice, power and asceticism. 'Umar's death proved that what 'Umar did and what he used to do merely showed a failure in security measures. 'Umar's death showed that security cannot always be achieved by means of justice. It indicated that it is not proper for a ruler to sleep under the shade of a tree without the protection of guards, nor is it proper for him to move about amongst the subjects, even in a mosque, unless he has a penchant for martyrdom.

But I should not conclude my discussion of this incident without mentioning something that can be considered one of the ironies or extraordinary contradictions of fate. 'Ubayd Allah, the son of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab killed three men he suspected had conspired to kill his father. The first of these three men was al-Hurmuzan, the man who related the anecdote with which we began the discussion.

Since we are talking about politics, let us say that although 'Umar's assassination was the first instance of a political assassination in an Islamic state, it was not the last. 'Uthman, who succeeded 'Umar, was killed after the siege of (Jahid) by rebels, most of whom were from Egypt. 'Uthman was then succeeded by 'Ali ibn Abu Talib who was killed by 'Abd-al-Rahman ibn Muljam who, I think, erroneously thought 'Ali ibn Abu Talib's death would save Muslims from internecine fighting and division.

Thus, dear reader, we come to the realization of an awesome, yet well-known fact: three of the first four caliphs were assassinated. One was killed by a Magian youth, and two were killed by radical Muslims. Suffice it to know that the first one who stabbed 'Uthman was Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and that 'Ali's assassin did not doubt for a moment that in killing 'Ali he was performing a great service to Islam and to Muslims. You may agree with me, dear reader, that the impact of this calamity is somewhat softened by the fact that the first caliph did escape assassination and die in bed of natural causes. I am referring, of course to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. But, dear reader, you will be dismayed like me when you learn that that remains an unconfirmed fact. According to some accounts Abu Bakr and al-Harith ibn Kildah were eating a dish of khazirah [meaning unknown], which had been presented as a gift to Abu Bakr. Al-Harith is

reported to have told Abu Bakr, "Eat no more from this dish, O Caliph. It is poisoned. You and I will die on the same day." Abu Bakr stopped eating from the dish, but the two men were not well after that, and they died on the same day at the end of the year.¹

Thus, we have the certainty of knowing that three of the first caliphs were assassinated, and we suspect that one may have been assassinated. And all this happened during 30 years of the Hijrah calendar, in less than 3 decades after the prophet's death. In other words, it happened during the life of his contemporaries. All this happened during the most radiant days of Islam, during those days that are the closest to the faith and principles of Islam.

This is one way of looking at this rich period of Islamic history, but it is not the only way. Other aspects of that period may be seen if one examines the years during which the orthodox caliphs ruled. One can thus recall with greater certainty that the period of stability did not last beyond 'Umar's administration and half of 'Uthman's, that is, the first 6 years of his term as caliph. Before that, most of the years of Abu Bakr's rather brief term as caliph, had been spent fighting those who renounced Islam. What followed, however, comprised the last 6 years of 'Uthman's administration. This is the period during which 'Uthman's opposition was led by a group of the earliest Muslims, among whom we may mention 'Abd-al-Rahman Abu 'Awf, al-Zubayr ibn 'Awwam, Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah, 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, Abu Dhirr al-Ghafari, 'Abdallah ibn Mas'ud, 'Ammar ibn Yasir and many others. When one goes beyond 'Uthman's term as caliph, it becomes possible to say without overstating the truth that 'Ali ibn Abu Talib's administration was nothing more than a period during which Muslims fought to make all Muslims pay homage to 'Ali. But this did not materialize, and 'Ali ibn Abu Talib himself fought to accomplish that until he himself was assassinated. At the time of his death there was much less agreement among Muslims about his succession than there was when he came to power. Some religious scholars even thought that proper succession was achieved only by the first three caliphs. But this is a matter that could be considered or at least debated.

It can be concluded from all this that the period during which the orthodox caliphs ruled may be divided into two. Muslims enjoyed stability during the first half of that period; this was in the early days of Islam when Muslims turned to foreign conquests. That may have been one of the reasons why stability marked that period but was missing during the second half of the orthodox caliphs' rule when Muslims opposed [their government] one time, became divided among themselves other times, and fought each other most of the time.

It behooves me to pause here briefly and ask myself before the reader asks me, "And what was the purpose of the foregoing exposition?" In fact, I can almost sense the question turn into a statement accusing me of trying to focus on the darker side of the events of this great period. But I swear to the reader that that had never crossed my mind. On the contrary, what I want to do is to create

1. "Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra", [The Upper Classes] by Ibn Sa'd, Vol 3, "On al-Badriyin: from Emigrants and Supporters," published in Beirut by Dar Sadir, p 198.

some kind of balance so that the reader can acquire an understanding of Islam comparable to mine: I want the reader to understand Islam from a politician's and an intellectual's perspective more than that of a clergyman. I want him to reach an understanding of Islam that is based on a fundamental principle: that Islam was not revealed to angels but rather to human beings like ourselves. Some of them strove against themselves and won, whereas others succumbed to human weaknesses and erred. As they struggle between overcoming their human weaknesses and succumbing to them, those people get closer and closer to us. The closer they get to our hearts and our lives, the better we can understand them; we can understand them better than we can if we were to overstate our accounts of their deeds, associate them with extraordinary sacred qualities, or attribute miracles and fables to their lives.

'Umar was a man like us, but he was greater than we are because he triumphed over his weaknesses and shunned the arrogance and pride of power. 'Uthman was a man like us, but his faith was greater than ours. At the same time he shared the weakness we have for our relatives and did not deny it. It is a weakness that one may also wish to describe as the power of mercy and the might of the strong affection one feels for one's relatives. This is a commendable quality in people, but because 'Uthman was in power, his opponents called his mercy favoritism, and his critics called his affection for his relatives preferring the Umayyads to the whole world. 'Ali ibn Abu Talib too was a man like us, but he was a man of religion more than he was a statesman; he was a man of wisdom more than he was a politician; he was a man who lived for the afterlife and not for this life. In everything that he was and was not 'Ali set the example and was the role model. This may have been his greatest attribute. At the same time, it may have also sealed his fate because 'Ali had to face a unique statesman and an extraordinary politician. 'Ali was opposed by a man who unquestionably and indisputably loved this world.

It is with such an understanding of their lives and circumstances that those orthodox caliphs are brought closer to us and we are brought closer to them. When we review the greatness of their conduct, we perceive them to grow in stature, and we aspire to be like them. But the stature they gain in our perceptions is linked with an understanding of their motives, a desire to emulate them and the possibility of following in their footsteps. Nor is their stature diminished by political assassination incidents. 'Umar's assassination did not diminish his stature, and 'Uthman's assassination was the result of the choice that 'Uthman himself made when he declined to abdicate or relinquish power. And 'Ali's assassination was nothing but an example provided by God for future generations to show them that religious extremism is an evil from whose consequences a great imam like 'Ali could not escape.

We can draw several conclusions from the foregoing discussion:

First, an ideal society or a utopia (a city of virtue) has never been achieved in all of human history, nor has it ever been achieved in the entire history of the Islamic Caliphate, not even in the most radiant days of Islam. Therefore, those who tell inexperienced young people that establishing a religious government would turn all of society into a heaven on earth where affection and tranquillity prevail; where citizens feel secure; where rulers feel safe; and where individuals would be free of evil intentions, malice and evil tendencies

are merely depicting a dream that has nothing to do with reality. Those people are describing a fantasy that has nothing to do with historical facts and is not based on human nature.

Second, everything that has so far been said is proof that there is quite a big difference between the Islamic religion and an Islamic state. Criticizing an Islamic state does not mean renouncing or deviating from Islam. One may find much to say about or object to in an Islamic state, even in its greatest days; but one can only bow reverentially, adoringly and faithfully when one talks about the Islamic faith. Thus, if this holds true for the days of the orthodox caliphs, it is even more true of subsequent administrations about which more can be said when these administrations are subjected to analysis and criticism. It was during those subsequent administrations that the banner of religious government was raised. Proponents of religious government proclaimed then that their government showed the true face of Islam; they claimed to be the guardians and protectors of the Koran; and they professed themselves to be the followers and adherents of the prophetic tradition. And yet, they were the ones who sanctioned undue killing and uncalled for injustice. They were the ones who entered into intimate relationships in situations that the earliest Muslims would not have been able to ascribe to the pre-Islamic pagans.

A distinction may thus be drawn between the Islamic religion and the Islamic state to protect the former when one disapproves of an Islamic state as a model to be followed, or when one fails to see a clear connection between one and the other. Islam is a divine message, but an Islamic state is a worldly institution. In His divine message God revealed precepts to regulate the affairs of the world, but He left other matters for people themselves to regulate. Rather than take anything away from the Koran, this shows God's vast mercy for people who know more about the affairs of their world than their ancestors did. God leaves it up to people to decide upon matters that change with time. He leaves them only general principles to follow: if they are broad-minded, they will borrow other people's practices and adjust to their times without deviating from the true religion or renouncing it. But if they are narrow-minded, they will turn those general principles into an authoritative dictum supporting their position, and they will be backed up by clergymen who can find a way out of everything as well as an authoritative justification for every departure from religion. I can speak at length about this, but I will not because I realize that Islam has nothing to do with that. I realize that God is more merciful than to have decreed for mankind what is claimed to have been decreed for them. God and true Muslims know that Islam is innocent of all that.

Let's set aside then what politicians say about religion and the state, but let's join them in accepting religion. What they say about the state is something that needs to be looked into: politicians do not say what they mean; greed is their purpose; and what they say appears to be merciful, but the bottom line is torture.

Let's then set aside what politicians say about the Koran and the sword. The Koran is in people's hearts, but history can tell us more than anyone can about the sword and what it did! History tells us that many more Muslims than non-Muslims died by the sword. Tell those who advocate the use of the sword that in the present world people are more inclined to be merciful and tolerant. Tell

them about Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas who disavowed civil strife when he said, "Show me a sword that can distinguish between right and wrong."

Third, we like to divide matters intentionally, and we deliberately ignore differences when we make comparisons so we can reach conclusions that are more compatible with our feelings than with our logic or reason. I think it is necessary to remind the reader here that logic has never been at odds with the principles of true religion, nor has it ever differed with them. When the truth is one's purpose and when one's intentions are sincere, logic has always supported and backed up those principles.

What I meant by dividing up matters may be inferred from my discussion on security and peace in the anecdote I related about sleeping under a tree. And what I meant by ignoring differences when making comparisons may be understood when comparisons are made between life in the early days of Islam and life today. If one were to take a reasonable approach, one would have to take into account the fact that during the early days of the orthodox caliphs there were fewer people living in al-Madinah al-Munawwarah than there are living in the smallest capital of an Egyptian governorate today. One has to take into account the vast difference between the means and methods of life then and now. It is not possible to expect a ruler in this day and age to walk through the marketplace bragging about his accomplishments or using them to gain a point against his opponents. Nor can a ruler in this day and age be expected to eavesdrop on people's homes at night to find out where the hungry children are so he can feed them. A modern day ruler cannot be expected to take his wife along on such expeditions so she can assist a woman in the throes of childbirth. Nor can he banish a handsome man from Cairo to prevent him from tempting the women in the city. A modern day ruler cannot lie sleepless at night because a mule stumbled in south Aswan; he cannot wipe his hands on his shoes because he does not have a handkerchief; nor can he wear a coat that has 12 patches on it. A modern day ruler cannot be the only one responsible for the country's treasury, accountable to no one but his own conscience and deterred by no one and nothing but his religion and his piety.

Those who ignore the conditions of the age and the changes that have taken place in the world when comparing past and present conditions are pursuing a difficult if not altogether impossible course. The problem cannot be solved by taking one's faith and emigrating to the caves of the eastern desert or the mountain trails of Yemen. Such modes of action would indicate a superficial approach to the problem and a failure to take its fundamental nature into account. Such an approach contends that cleaning one's teeth with toothpicks, using kohl on the eyes, keeping society in a state of ignorance and adopting the names of our virtuous ancestors are the ultimate objectives of piety. Such practices will most certainly not solve the problem; they will merely create a clash between Islam and the conditions of the age which can only be explained as the product of a combination of good intentions and a lack of understanding.

I may wonder, and the reader may join me in wondering whether or not this is a more feasible approach for Islam and Muslims. Would it not be more useful for us to take our time and analyze the conditions of our contemporary world? Should we not try our best to come to terms with those conditions in society for which there are no counterparts or similarities in the early days of Islam? Should we

not try to lay down new rules for a new society? Should we not have rules that do not ignore the spirit of the age or its variables? Should we not have rules that acknowledge at the same time the certainty that we are dealing with human beings in a society where human error has been and will always be part of its makeup? Should we not have rules that recognize the human weaknesses in society? In the final analysis, this is a matter of setting a good example, giving sound advice, and using an open-minded approach rather than coercion, violence and ignoring facts to set the right course for people.

Fourth, political matters may not be taken as superficially and lightly as they are being taken; nor may they be interpreted as poorly as they are now being interpreted. We may accept people's good fortunes as an affliction, and we may think the evil that befalls them a test, but it would be a gross mistake to make such judgments about the affairs of nations. A person who makes such judgments may find himself faced with interpretations that fly in the face of his intentions. Anyone who scans but does not examine newspapers closely can find many examples of this. Regardless of the motivation, I cannot understand, for example, the sense of gratification expressed by an apologist for the assassination of a former president when he states that the assassination was an act of divine vengeance. He forgets that his statement about this assassination and the assassinations of orthodox caliphs may be refuted by a question that appears to be innocent but is in fact a refutation of such assertions. If our defeat in 1967 were a manifestation of divine wrath, what do we say about Israel's victory? Was it a demonstration of God's pleasure with the Israelis? If the decline in our country's standard of living were a sign of God's displeasure with us for departing from His laws, how can we explain the rise in the standard of living in western countries?

I can go on and on asking such questions whose only purpose would be to make us wonder about those who make hasty rather than rational judgments. Not everything bad is an indication of [divine] displeasure or affliction; such matters can be easily analyzed and the reasons for them, whether they are brought about by an individual or a group, can be determined. If these matters need to be confronted, they may be confronted easily with rational solutions that would neither diminish nor augment our faith. We can come up with such solutions without having to run away from problems by choosing the easiest way out and attributing them to divine will. Accepting divine will and divine power is a matter that transcends such interpretations. Examples of that are the drought and the plague that occurred during 'Umar ibn al-Khattab's term as caliph. And 'Umar and his age, as we know them, are above suspicion; they cannot be suspected of incurring God's wrath against His faithful believers. We ought to stand quietly alongside those who exclaim every time something goes wrong or something unfortunate happens to us that God is punishing us for departing from His law. Those people tell us that if we were to change our ways and apply the laws of God, our misfortune would turn into good fortune and our poverty would turn into wealth. We ought to tell those people that their arguments are quite weak and may be refuted by saying that the canonical laws of Islam ought to be applied because one wants to apply them and not because one wants to use them to obtain wealth or riches. We can tell them that what is happening in this day and age may be easily attributed to the shortcomings of government or its failure to follow the best course. These are two matters for which solutions can be found by making analogies that do not ignore the greatest gift of religion, one's conscience. To put it briefly, the shortcomings and failures of government and the application of Islamic law are two separate issues.

Fifth, separating religion from politics and from matters of government would be beneficial to both religion and politics, contrary to what we are told by those who do not advocate such a separation. And here I ought to set religion and politics apart before setting forth two matters in detail. The first matter is one I accept and call for: religion should be separated from politics. The second matter is one I reject and do not find convincing: it is that of ignoring religion as one of the foundations of society. The difference between the two points is considerable. Religion is desirable because it is one of the foundations upon which conscience is formed in society. All of us are pleased when our children learn the principles of religion in school and when they memorize the Koran or parts of it. All of us like to listen to verses from the Koran recited in the media, and all of us rejoice when we celebrate religious occasions. All of us like to see clergymen being recognized, respected and honored. All this and more are indications of an acceptable and even desirable presence of religion in a state. This is also completely different from the issue of separating religion from politics, which is an issue I will allow myself to discuss at some length with you, the reader. My case lies in what history books tell us not only about the more recent ages of Islam, but also about its earliest days.

Take note of what happened in the latter days of 'Uthman's term as caliph and what may have been a reason for the rebellion against him. Among the rebels were 5 of the 10 men who had been promised Paradise. These men were 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, 'Abd-al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam, Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas, and Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah. The rebels disapproved of, among other things, the fact that 'Uthman appointed his relatives in positions of responsibility in big cities. They disapproved of 'Uthman giving refuge to those whose expulsion from the city had been ordered by the prophet. They disapproved of him disposing of treasury funds without any rules: he was generous when bestowing funds on his relatives and close associates, but he withheld funds from others. The rebels disapproved of 'Uthman's persecution of some of the prophet's better known companions, including Abu Dhirr al-Ghafari, 'Ammar ibn Yasir and 'Abdallah ibn Mas'ud.

Join me, if you will, in wondering whether 'Uthman's actions were religious or political. But be careful before you answer that question: if you say that 'Uthman's actions were religious in nature, you will be going against the consensus of those with whom you and I would disagree only when they are mistaken. But if you say that his actions were political, then you will have pleased others as well as yourself. You will have also pleased me by assuring me that my ideas are accurate and that there is a difference between Islam and Muslims. Islam is sacred and divine, but Muslims are fallible because they are human and worldly, and this is something that neither an age nor a name can change or alter. By separating and identifying such incidents as ones related to political issues rather than religious ones, you would be preserving the beauty, glory, awesomeness and sanctity of religion. In the final analysis you can be satisfied with your judgment since 'Uthman's mistakes, may God be pleased with him, were not meant to affect Islam or infringe upon its greatness or nobility.

The reader may shift his attention with me now to the time when 'Ali ibn Abu Talib was caliph. He may pause with me briefly, and he may ponder with me at some length the well-known battle of al-Jamal in which 'Ali and his followers were pitched against 'Aishah, the prophet's wife, Talhah and al-Zubayr. These

two parties were not contenders in a discussion or intellectual debate; they were engaged in a conflict in which swords, bows and arrows were used. They were engaged in a conflict so fierce that cries could be heard on both sides of the fray calling upon fighters to dismember each other. But before we set out to talk about the fighting, let us ask, as 'Ali's followers did, how can al-Zubayr, Talhah and 'Aishah agree on something that is wrong? And there is of course the question asked by the other party in the dispute: Can 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, 'Ammar ibn Yasir and 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbas agree on something that is wrong? The truth is that the question will remain unanswered on both sides, or it will be answered in the negative on both sides also. This has a considerable effect on the faith, but a way out of that dilemma can be found if one remembers that the matter was more political than it was religious. This was more of a dispute over government than it was a matter of arbitration. If it were not so, then how else can we explain the fate of the youth from al-Kufah who was ordered by 'Ali to stand between the two ranks, hold up the Koran and call upon people to remember its precepts and to follow them? There are different accounts of how this youth was killed. Some said that he was killed by bows and arrows. Some said that when his right hand was cut off, he held the Koran in his left hand. When his left hand was cut off, he held the Koran between his teeth or his shoulders until he died. It is said that Ka'b ibn Thawr met with the same fate.

The reader can then concur with me and reach the only conclusion we can reach: it is damnable politics that stirred people's hearts and aroused their anger. It is politics that brought matters to such a state wherein a person who advocates the use of the Koran to arbitrate and settle disputes becomes embroiled in a conflict that costs him his life. Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah was killed in the battle and so was al-Zubayr although accounts about the latter's death vary. Nothing saved Muslims but 'Ali's plea that the camel which the mother of the faithful was riding be killed. It is not necessary for me to mention here the conversation she had with with her brother, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, or 'Ali's conversation with her. The liberties taken by both parties in the conversation are understandable and justifiable by the vehemence of the conflict.

The reader may join me now in wondering--and he would be justified in having all these questions--about the destiny of Islam: if this is what happened among the early Muslims who were promised paradise, what will happen with those whose stature and faith are considerably less than that of the early Muslims? The reader may join me again in wondering: if this is the way in which disagreement is expressed over a specific issue such as avenging 'Uthman's murder, what then can possibly happen over issues that are more complex? What can we expect from men who have not studied religion as closely as others have and who are far removed from the days of the great prophet? In fact, the reader will discover with me an indubitable fact. He will discover that this is not a matter of the Koran and the tradition; it is rather a matter of who interprets them. Neither I nor the reader doubts that the parties to the dispute were people who understood the Koran best. Nor do we question the fact that the noble prophet himself is the source for the prophetic tradition. And yet, each of the parties to the dispute had its own opinion, and their dispute led them into fighting and bloodshed.

Let the reader once again reach the same conclusion I reached in this part of the discussion and join me in asking this question: Would it not be more

accurate to view all the civil strife and the fighting that took place in the past as matters that had to do with politics and the affairs of this world? I have no doubt that the answer to that question will be affirmative since an affirmative answer would rule out the implications that a negative answer would have about religion being a reason and a cause for disunity and division. God forbid that that be true! And yet, let me continue in this vein and proceed to a more important point: separating the two issues of religion and politics would be merciful to Islam and to Muslims. If we have a political disagreement that is based on religion, each one of us will hold on to his opinion out of the conviction that what one is upholding is not an opinion but rather a correct interpretation of religion. None of us then would accept an opponent's victory or his different opinion. And how sweet it would be to give up one's life or limbs to defend what he rightly or wrongly believes is true. It is such a close association between religion and politics that may have led to violence in old as well as modern Islamic movements--certainly more often in old Islamic movements. This is because the other party's belief in its own point of view is not less than ours; it is a point of view that does not recognize any other. But when religion and politics are separated, as they are now, the matter is exactly the opposite. We can then disagree, and we can accept disagreement. We can talk about our disagreements, but we do not fight about them with swords. We accept gracefully or angrily the majority's decision against an opinion of ours, but we do not go beyond criticizing the other opinion because we hope that the majority will one day favor ours.

Sixth, an examination of Islamic history confirms a fact that appears to be quite extraordinary to one who utilizes his reason and logic, God's greatest gift to man, to analyze matters calmly and deliberately. This fact which is confirmed by an examination of Islamic history is that Islamic theologians suffered most from political governments that wrapped themselves in religion. The reader may find that astonishing, particularly since history books limit what they tell us to advice from a worshiper or a word of wisdom from one who has renounced his interest in worldly matters. On the other side one only finds an account about a ruler who prostrated himself to worship God, who wept in fear of God until his beard got wet or who took the short way out and fell unconscious.

And here let's return once again to our discussion about taking historical accounts out of context. Before clarifying what we mean, we will rule out scores and scores of clergymen who were preoccupied with interpreting the caliphs' wishes into rules of jurisprudence. In fact--and may God save us from that--they turned them into different traditions to be attributed to God's messenger. But let's forget about all that; it's all nonsense that we can dispense with. Let's talk instead about the four indisputable imams of Muslim jurisprudence: Abu Hanifah, Malik, al-Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal.

The reader may find the story of Abu Hanifah with Caliph al-Mansur as amazing as I did. Abu Hanifah was imprisoned, tortured in prison, whipped until his head got swollen and then released briefly. The reader may think that there was a good reason for all that and that Abu Hanifah had opposed or criticized the caliph's politics. However, the reader will be alarmed when he finds out that Abu Hanifah was subjected to all that torture because he had declined his appointment as court administrator. Abu Hanifah did not wish to become part of

the caliph's retinue because he wished to maintain his integrity. He also wanted to stand by the statement he had made to the caliph when he told him, "My pleasure cannot indeed be assured; how then can you be secure from my anger?" If one were to contemplate that statement, one would become more and more distressed. This statement did nothing for Abu Hanifah who was imprisoned a second time by al-Mansur for declining to accept the caliph's gifts. Abu Hanifah was held in a dark, prison cell where he was whipped daily. The fact that he was 70 years old did not intercede for him. Only when he was on the verge of death was he released from prison after being given small amounts of poison so he would not be able to tell others what had happened to him. And Abu Hanifah soon died.

Some people find it quite easy to find evidence of a keen conscience, a steadfast faith and a closeness to God in al-Mansur's exclamation and plea for mercy and forgiveness. Al-Mansur exclaimed, "And who will absolve me from guilt over Abu Hanifah's life and death?". It seems to me that al-Mansur was true to himself when he was doing what he was doing to Abu Hanifah. If one were to look into his statements and speeches, one would discover that al-Mansur was a man whose pronouncements indicated that he saw himself as inseparable from Islam. He could not imagine anything being attributed to Islam that was also not attributed to him or proclaimed by his retinue. He could not imagine any scholar of any stature proclaiming anything that was not attributed to him also.

The purpose of relating this story may also be obvious. It is a digression from a point that can easily be proven: the caliphate which has been described as Muslim was mostly a worldly and not a religious institution. It was a political institution and not an institution that governed according to the laws of God. In fact, one may say that in some cases, if not in most, the caliphate overstepped its bounds and clashed head-on with Islam as represented by its great symbols of religious scholars.

If we travel through history beyond Imam Abu Hanifah to learn about Imam Malik ibn Uns, we will be told that the governor of the city--this too was during al-Mansur's term as caliph--had ordered his men to whip Imam Malik. The governor's men whipped Imam Malik, pulled and dragged him by the hand and dislocated his shoulder. Then they took him home and placed him under house arrest. He was not allowed to leave the house to pray, and he was not allowed to have visitors.¹ These wrongs were not rectified when al-Mansur subsequently visited the city during the pilgrimage season and tried to gain Imam Malik's good will. He denied issuing such orders to the governor and punished him. But I can almost swear that Imam Malik's presence in the city and the distance between him and the seat of government in Baghdad as well as the presence of people like Ibn Abu Layla and Ibn Sharmah in the caliph's retinue provided a reasonable explanation for the fact that Imam Malik was not harmed as much as Abu Hanifah was. Distance was also the reason why al-Shafi'i escaped the caliphs' injustice when he was living in Egypt, far away from the seat of the caliphate and its authority. However, Imam al-Shafi'i was not denied the dubious distinction of being reviled and insulted by a foolish theologian like Fityan who was irritated by Imam al-Shafi'i's knowledge and fame. Fityan's insults to Imam al-Shafi'i forced the

1. "A'imah al-Fiqh al-Tis'ah," [The Nine Imams of Jurisprudence] by 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Sharqawi, Kitab al-Yawm, p 84.

ruler to have Fityan whipped--and that punishment so far was reasonable according to the standards of the age--and then paraded around in the city on the back of a camel after his beard, moustache and hair had been shaved. This procession was preceded by the town crier who would proclaim periodically, "This is the punishment of those who insult the family of God's messenger!" ¹

The reader may join me here in pondering the method of punishment and the reasons for it, and he may express his bewilderment with me. The reader may then go along with me to find out what happened afterwards. A few dishonorable supporters of Fityan laid an ambush for Imam al-Shafi'i. They waited for him until he finished his lecture at the mosque. After all visitors left the mosque, they took him by surprise and beat him up with canes they had hidden in their clothes. They beat him until he lost consciousness, and they were able to flee. Imam al-Shafi'i was then carried to his house where he died. The reader may have his suspicions about the identity of the fleeing murderers, and he may even wish to rise above such suspicions and ask God to protect him from the evil of suspicion.

A word about Imam Ibn Hanbal remains to be said, and that is a sad topic indeed. What happened to Imam Ibn Hanbal ought to be a lesson to those who brag about the heyday of Islamic thought during the Abbasid Caliphate. What happened to Imam Abu Hanbal also ought to be a lesson to those who dream about a caliphate in our modern age. It ought to be a lesson to those who conjure up the image of a ruler who exists only in their imagination. Those dreamers dream of a ruler who has Abu Bakr's mercy, 'Ali's jurisprudence, 'Umar's forcefulness, 'Uthman's gentleness and 'Umar ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz's sense of justice. They dream of a ruler who would create councils of learning all over Egypt where scholars would freely share opinions on religious matters, debate such matters in a friendly spirit, use authoritative and valid arguments to refute their opponents' opinions, rebut their critics with kind words and seek the arbitration of a just and ascetic caliph when an agreement on something eludes them. Those dreamers dream of a caliph who turns to an Islamic advisory council when he fails to come up with an opinion. Members of that council would be knowledgeable and patient people. They would know how to settle disputes, and they would bring their patience into play to end discord. Then all the caliph would have to do is summon the disputants and convey to them that council's legal opinion. Because a caliph would convey his paternal affection and his true Islamic concern to all parties in a dispute, they would comply with the verdict and they would embrace each other before going to the mosque where they would proceed together, hand in hand, with God's blessings supporting them and lending them guidance and levelheadedness.

Forget about those dreams, dear reader. Or better still, keep them in mind as we shift to the bitter truth in Ibn Hanbal's story which began when the Caliph al-Ma'mun came to believe what al-Mu'tazilah were saying about the creation of the Koran. This is a philosophical issue in which Ibn Hanbal held a view different from the caliph's. I do not think that subscribing to one opinion or the other would cause a Muslim to depart from his religion. But this is the power complex in a religious state and the presumptuous power of those who confuse their independent opinions with the principles of the faith. It is this presumptuous power that caused the 56-year old Ibn Hanbal to be bound in chains

1. Ibid., p 169.

and taken to al-Ma'mun. Fettered and chained he was carried on a camel along with one of his young students, Muhammad ibn Nuh, who died en route. It so happened that al-Ma'mun died before Ibn Hanbal's arrival. But al-Ma'mun's death did not end Ibn Hanbal's torture; it was only the beginning. Al-Mu'tasim kept Ibn Hanbal prisoner in the great prison of Baghdad where he was tortured and whipped. He was then transferred to a private prison in the cellar of the governor's house in Baghdad where he was held in solitary confinement--and that increased his torment. In that prison he was bound by more chains and placed under more restrictions for about 2 years and a half.

This is what happened to the four great imams who enriched the world with their knowledge, their jurisprudence and their wisdom. What happened to them could not have been a matter of coincidence. Such coincidences would not recur with all the imams, at least not sequentially with three of them. What happened to the four imams could also not be an aberration or an exception. What happened to them was more likely the rule or rather the natural course of things. And do not think, dear reader, that the history of the Abbasid caliphs which we related here dealt with people who were obscure or of little importance. Quite the contrary: one cannot go beyond al-Mansur and count five of the greatest caliphs after the orthodox caliphs. One may even count al-Ma'mun as one of the orthodox caliphs. And although al-Mu'tasim is the famous conqueror of 'Amuriyah, all this is a matter of how one measures things. These men were great men if one were to judge them by the world's standards as statesmen. They were great men if one were to judge them by the standards of Islamic conquests: they consolidated the pillars of Islam throughout the world. They were also admirable men if one were to measure them by the standards of their religious appearances: they performed the pilgrimage and they contributed to charity. They were also the subject of anecdotes in which they engaged in conversations with ascetic men at the end of which they would express their dismay at the prospect of confinement and torment of the grave. However, the stature and greatness of these men becomes the subject of considerable doubt when one reviews and contemplates some of the foregoing accounts.

You, the reader, may accept any standards you wish to accept, and you may also, if you wish, leave behind those historical accounts, or rather tragedies, and look at today's facts. You may wish to compare with me those situations that we related with the honor and dignity that major religious scholars enjoy today. They have access to the printed and broadcast media--radio and television--and they are protected by laws that most of them describe as man-made and secular. You, the reader, may compare this situation with what happened to the great imams of jurisprudence, those men whose knowledge and jurisprudence none of the contemporaries can claim to match.

Those religious scholars ought to thank God for blessing them with the security of being immune from [a ruler's] pleasure and anger. We ought to be very grateful to God because we have not seen an execution board and we have not had swords held to our necks. We can turn to God, dear reader, you and I, if you should find what I mentioned convincing, because we will encounter much prejudice. We will be called many names, such as secularists and non-believers. But cheer up and don't be sad. Remember with me the story of Imam 'Ali who declined the ruse of using the Koran in an arbitration dispute but was forced to do so and was then censured for it. Then, dear reader, you may re-read what I

wrote if you wish, and you will find no evidence of disloyalty or apostasy. Instead, you will find much truth to the self and a considerable measure of patriotism. You will also find a discussion that is naturally and deliberately calm. You may look everywhere in the book, but you will find no quotations from the Koran and no citations from the prophetic tradition because the tradition in its entirety dealt with political, worldly and intellectual matters; it did not deal with religious matters, matters of the afterlife or matters of jurisprudence. I hope I did make it clear that what is presently being said about a religious state or a religious government is a matter of politics and government and not a matter of doctrine or faith. Statements such as those that are being made about a religious government would lead us into what is an unknown quantity to us but a known quantity to them. It is an intentional and a deliberate effort to disregard facts and to act recklessly and precipitously.

I hope that the foregoing discussion will become an acceptable invitation for a calm dialogue. I hope that those who would take issue with this opinion will use arguments and facts and give up that habit which has become widespread in recent years. I do not know why this habit has become so widespread, but I will say that it may be one of many of the signs of bad times. I am talking about the habit of those who volunteer to respond to an argument without bothering to read the statement to which they are responding.

May God protect us and them from the inability to perceive and understand and from the failure to know our purpose.

2. The Intent To Be Ignorant

I was talking with a correspondent of an Arab newspaper, and I was explaining in some detail the notion of separating religion from politics. The correspondent interrupted me to voice his disagreement with what I was saying, and I retorted sharply and furiously. That conversation became a chapter in this book.

Let us begin with the questions.

Do you wish to restrict the mosque to the function of performing religious services and calling upon believers to pray? Have you forgotten the conversation about bridal money that 'Umar had with a woman? Have you forgotten the conversation that a Muslim had with 'Umar about the length of his robe? Is not this clear evidence that the mosque is the natural place for dialogue between a Muslim ruler and his Muslim opposition? Do you want to disregard this golden period of our Islamic history when the mosque was a place of worship, a state-house and the Muslim people's assembly at the same time? Whose interests would be served by that? My dear man, I do have doubts about your intentions!

Let us go to the answers.

Let me try to find out what's on your mind, my friend, from the questions you asked. Let me imagine that behind those questions which you verbalized with a warm spontaneity is a multidimensional composite picture, the first part of which manifests itself in your belief that what happened in 'Umar's days is suitable for application in today's world, whether it has to do with the ruler or with his subjects: those who support him as well as those who oppose him. The

second dimension of that picture manifests itself in the psychological pressure you feel because a few prayer leaders in some mosques who play a role from the pulpit that is clearly political have been removed from their positions since September 1981. The third dimension of that composite picture is manifested in your view that there is a secular conspiracy to reduce the role of mosques and accordingly the role of Islam and to limit that role to the practice of religion. You think there is a conspiracy to keep religion out of politics, which is part of religion. In fact, it is Islam's separateness from politics that distinguishes it from other religions.

These are the dimensions of the picture you have in your mind, as I see it. But let me discuss the picture I have in mind and talk about it on two levels. On the first level we can accept your statements and your views and apply them to the present world. If it turns out that your views would be good for society, I will concede to you, but if your views prove to be harmful, then I will take you with me to the second level of dialogue where we would discuss the shortcomings of your views, which, I think, would be the other side of the strengths you see in them.

Let's begin with the first level, and let's imagine that the role of the mosque has been restored to what it was in the days of our first Islamic ancestors. Let's imagine that one of the duties of the prayer leader during the Friday prayer was to discuss political matters from a religious standpoint. That prayer leader would then take advantage of the afternoon or evening religious lesson to declare his support or opposition to new political matters. True believers would seek out imams in the mosques to measure and judge the affairs of their world against the provisions of their religion. If they find the imam's opinion to be accurate, they would mutter to themselves, "God is great; thanks be to God; and God's will be done in the past and in the hereafter." But if they disagree with the imam's opinion, they would make their opposition known and they would cite verses from the Koran and incidents from the true prophetic tradition to prove their point.

Contrary to what our dear friend thinks, this practice will generate differences and civil discord; it will not promote homogeneity and unity, and this will be true not only of grave and important matters, but also of the most trivial matters. It is easy to provide proof of that. For example, the prayer leader of a mosque in Hada'iq al-Qubbah would declare that the peace treaty was sinful and that the head of state had to abrogate it immediately, in keeping with God's judgment on the matter. He would affirm that there can be no peace with the Jews who invaded the Muslims' country and initiated hostilities. The prayer leader may in fact become quite emotional, expressing what he believes to be consistent with the true religion, and he may threaten the head of state, if he were still a prayer leader. He may threaten to have an army of horses and men swarming around the presidential palace, and he may say that the young people of Hada'iq al-Qubbah would use their swords from now on to defend the truth. I do not exaggerate when I make such statements, nor do I rely on a sick imagination. In fact, I may have come quite close to depicting the facts of recent history.

On the other side, another prayer leader in Misr al-Qadimah, for example, may speak up in support of what al-Azhar's scholars have declared as their support for the peace treaty. They said it was a victory for Islam and for Muslims

because it liberated Muslim territory and returned Muslims to their land. I do not think anyone would accuse those al-Azhar scholars of renouncing Islam or deviating from it. That prayer leader would call upon the head of state to adhere to the treaty, and his enthusiasm may get the better of him and he may threaten the head of state with an army of horses and men if he should abrogate it. He may even swear that the young people of Misr al-Qadimah would take up arms from now on to defend the survival of the treaty. It would then be quite conceivable that some of the young people from Misr al-Qadimah could coincidentally find themselves praying in the mosque in Hada'iq al-Qubbah where they may wish to emulate what you mentioned, my friend, about the opposition's discussion inside the mosque. They would then interrupt the prayer leader's Friday sermon and defend the treaty. By the same token, the opposite may happen, and people from Hada'iq al-Qubbah may find themselves by coincidence praying in the mosque in Misr al-Qadimah where they would return the compliment.

But I do not think that the matter would end with people from Hada'iq al-Qubbah descending upon Misr al-Qadimah with horses and men or vice versa. The reader may find some measure of exaggeration in my statements. He may then in this case be modest in his views. To settle the argument let him imagine that Cairo and its mosques would be divided into specialized districts. Certain mosques would be for peace; other mosques would be for war; and there would be mosques where the conflict remained unsettled. This would be the case regarding matters of major importance. Regarding matters of less importance, let's not forget the controversies that were stirred by the Personal Status Law and the charges that were leveled against honorable religious scholars because of it. Those people swore and still swear that the law is based on principles of jurisprudence from the Malik School. Proponents of Ibn Hanbal's School, however, do not accept it, and the followers of the Shafi'i School appeal to God for His protection from the sinfulness of some of its articles. Followers of the Hanafi School pray God that He save the nation from the consequences of the sins that will be committed as a result of that law. Some people summarized those sins by saying that the law allows women to have two husbands at the same time. And here we may give our imaginations free reign and imagine what life might be like. We may imagine a prayer leader from Ibn Hanbal's school in Misr al-Jadidah; a prayer leader from the Shafi'i school in al-Zaytun; another from the Maliki school in al-Matariyyah; and a fourth from the Hanafi school in 'Ayn Shams. It would be all right for them to disagree with each other and for the Shafi'i imam to move from here to there or for the Hanbali imam to move from there to here. We may even allow ourselves to imagine an imam's discussion with the opposition or his discussion of the use of weapons to defend the true faith. Or we may fall back on a vision of peace and be content with keeping each imam in his special area or domain.

You seem to be surprised and alarmed, my friend. In fact, it seems to me that if you were to collect your thoughts and calm down, you would tell me that I was exaggerating and that what I think might happen could not happen. After all, neither the facts that I outlined nor the reactions to them did happen. I would then say that what I think might happen has not yet happened for one simple reason: the political imams are in the opposition. And that is why we hear nothing from them but an opposing viewpoint. Expressions of support are coming from the media. And yet, all this depends on having the framework of a civil state, for, if the views of young members of religious societies should ever

prevail, the exact opposite of that would happen under the framework of a religious state. Their views are quite different from those of any form of government in a neighboring regime that claims to adopt Islam as its doctrine and system of government.

In fact, let me make matters easy for you, and let me take you beyond the previous flights of fancy for which, rightly or wrongly, I can see actual or possible support. Let me confront you with a fact that you may have overlooked: you are a victim of an imperfect interpretation of historical facts. The Islamic state, which survived for 13 centuries, knew of no opposition inside the mosque, except that which you yourself mentioned. Such opposition manifested itself in no more than two instances that are frequently mentioned and have become well-known. In fact, let me be careful about this and skip over the days of the orthodox caliphs, which amounted to no more than 30 years of the Hijrah calendar. Let me talk about all the subsequent periods of Islamic history: that is, 13 centuries less 40 years. Let me tell you that the sword was the Islamic state's answer to opposition. I will also tell you without exaggeration that in most cases support for the Islamic state came only by the sword. What the earliest Muslims did not like about Mu'awiyah's pledge of allegiance to his son Yazid evolved during 'Abd-al-Malak ibn Marawan's administration into an automatic pledge of allegiance to his successor and to his successor after that. For example, a pledge of allegiance was demanded simultaneously for Walid and for Sulayman after him. When a well-known Muslim¹ declined to make such a pledge simultaneously to two rulers, Hisham ibn Isma'il al-Makhzumi² took that Muslim to a place in al-Madinah called al-Thaniyah, where people were executed or crucified. Al-Makhzumi put fear in that Muslim's heart and then brought him back. When Marawan ibn 'Abd-al-Malik heard of this, he censured Hisham. And you may well wonder along with me when you consider this censure. Marawan said, "Shame on Hisham! He should have merely invited him to make his pledge of allegiance. My father would have cut off the man's head." That simply, that bluntly and that easily. I do not think that anyone who is fond of defending anything and everything can show me that declining to pledge allegiance to al-Walid and Sulayman implies either departure from religion or renunciation of the true religion.

It would be all right to go back to part of our discussion on the mosque. Nor would there be any harm, dear reader, in reminding you of an amusing incident. Ziyad, being his father's son, sat in the pulpit when he first came to power in al-Kufah. He sat quietly for a long time, and people began to mutter. But Ziyad maintained his silence, and as time went by a few people exclaimed and asked him to speak. But Ziyad remained silent. Then a few of the people who were provoked by such conduct took the initiative of telling those seated next to them, "Shame on the Umayyads! Could they not find anyone other than this inarticulate man to govern al-Kufah? Let's pelt him with stones." And they did. Ziyad then stood up and left the pulpit. He asked his guards to close all the doors to the mosque but one. He stood in front of that door and instructed the people to leave the mosque in groups of four--in the modern military sense. Then Ziyad asked each

1. Sa'id ibn al-Masib.

2. "Tarikh al-Tabari," [Al-Tabari's History], Vol 5, Al-A'la Publishing House, Beirut, p 209.

group of four leaving the mosque to swear separately that no one in that group had pelted him with stones. If all of them swore, they were all safe, but if one of them--only one--did not, Ziyad had their left hands and right feet cut off.

This is an incident that happened in a mosque, dear reader. It happened 50 years before the prophet's death. And I can tell you numerous such examples, but we do not need them because they have nothing to do with Islam. These examples discredit those who ruled in the name of Islam and whose governments had nothing to do with Islam. But let me go back once again to our discussion of the mosque and let me ask you this: isn't there something that you noticed along with me? Did it not become evident to you from what you yourself have read and from the examples I mentioned that we are always talking about one mosque, the mosque in the capital of a state or province? In other words, have you not noticed that such accounts are restricted to that mosque where the caliph or the governor delivers his addresses? If the rest of the mosques had been involved in politics, for or against the government, history would have given us examples of that. But there are no such examples. History does not report to us news of the mosque in al-Ta'if, the mosque in Hamah or the mosque in Damietta or anywhere else. And that confirms the historical fact that the mosque during the days of the prophet, may God bless him and grant him salvation, and during the days of the orthodox caliphs, may God be pleased with them, served the functions of government, the media and the people's assembly simultaneously. And that is why it became associated with the capital or the place where the ruler resided. But as time went by and modern means of information emerged, as institutions of government evolved and became more complex, and as the people's or representatives' assemblies became independent, the only function left for the mosque was its primary and fundamental function: that of religious instruction. Our discussion here is restricted to the mosque in the capital. But as far as the other mosques are concerned, their only function since the birth of Islam has been and will always be that of religious instruction.

In fact, let me explore this matter further, and let me propose to you another point of view. Wouldn't you agree that restricting the mosque's function to that of expounding religious precepts and instilling into people those religious values that Muslims would not disagree about achieves the purposes of those who go to the mosque to pray? Limiting the mosque's function to that of religious instruction demonstrates respect for those people's intellectual freedom, and I swear that Islam does protect and enhance that freedom. But you may wonder about the relationship between what I am proposing as the mosque's role and freedom. There is a simple explanation for that. When a prayer leader reviews issues about which there is agreement, he does not provoke dissent or arouse conflict in people's hearts. When he presents political issues, however, he is most certainly presenting controversial issues. It is here that you, the reader, will have to ask yourself a question if you disagreed with him--and disagreeing with the prayer leader would not detract from your faith or your piety. Doesn't the imam's position in the pulpit add greater weight to an opinion which is ultimately his own personal opinion? Let us take that question one step further: isn't the imam in such a case confusing his personal opinion with the sanctity of religion? Like me, you would find that to be true since the imam chose to express his opinion from a platform that you and I kneel in front of in veneration. But let us now come together to the most important question. Don't you agree that this places restrictions on your freedom to speak your own mind

or even to hear those individual opinions and interpretations that you would like to hear? When an imam expresses his personal opinions on political issues from the pulpit, you are required to sit submissively and humbly in the mosque, not because of his opinion but because the mosque is a sacred place. Your silence is required, not because you agree with his opinion, but out of respect for the sanctity of religious services. And you may become angry, not because your faith is weak, but because you believe that the argument set forth by the person who introduced the controversy and the conflict is weak, and you believe that the argument was set forth in a place intended for concord, in a place you sought to find accord.

And here I would shift to the second level of the discussion, and I would explain that the weakest point in your argument lies in the fact that you ignore the differences between the earliest ages of Islam and our present age. But if you were to discuss the matter calmly, you would come to the same conclusions I came to. You cannot deny that the media--newspapers, radio and television--we have in our contemporary world are powerful means of communication; they are more effective in disseminating a ruler's decrees and state laws than imams in mosques at Friday or communal prayers. You cannot deny that government institutions in a state have introduced methods of dealing with people, such as social etiquette or protocol, that cannot be allowed in a mosque. This is also true of modern methods of communication, and it applies to what is required of large numbers of specialists in their respective fields. You will agree with me that opposition to a ruler or government would be more feasible and more forceful if it were carried out by parties, parliamentary bodies or opposition newspapers and magazines than if it were carried out by a Muslim who makes his opinion known in a mosque in front of an imam who does not have the data he needs to respond to a question, discuss a matter or verify the accuracy of another person's opinion. You would not disagree with me that the mosque is the most powerful institution when it comes to exercising religious influence in everything that has to do with the principles or branches of the faith. No matter how powerful the media can become, they cannot come close to exercising the kind of power the mosque has in religious matters. Anyone who watches television, listens to the radio or reads a magazine or newspaper does not have to be in a psychologically or physically receptive condition to listen to good advice, to a holy verse from the Koran or to an account from the prophetic tradition or interpretations thereof. But the person who goes to the mosque is psychologically prepared to pray. His body is pure, and the only thing on his mind is his wish to learn more about religion.

You may now agree with me that contemporary developments have forced the mosque to devote itself to that activity for which it was designated. The mosque is to present religious precepts, and it is to establish them firmly in Muslims' hearts. I would not agree with you--and in fact I would try to change your mind--that this constitutes a restriction or a limitation of the mosque's role. God forbid that spreading the faith and establishing it in people's hearts be an easy task or a secondary role. May God forgive me if this is something that ever crossed my mind or if I even claimed it. May God forgive anyone who brags about or is satisfied with his opposition to such a role for the mosque.

Let us now consider together the most important point that I will make to you in this discussion. It has to do with a question that crossed my mind before it

crossed yours. It is a question that has been on my mind during my waking hours and has kept me sleepless at night. It is a question to which I have not yet found a satisfactory answer. What I have already presented to you and what I will present to you below are matters that cross your mind and mine. They are certainly matters that cross the minds of political clergymen. Let me set before you examples that were undoubtedly set before those clergymen during the first years of their education in religious institutions or in books on Islamic history they undoubtedly read. How is it then that they come to conclusions that are different from those we came to and different from those that would be reached by anyone who employs logic in associating cause and effect and associating incidents with the lessons learned from them?

They are undoubtedly aiming at those readers who do not know them or who have not been keeping up with what they have been saying, and they have deliberately obfuscated those facts they know for certain to be true and those whose truth they can ascertain without too much difficulty or effort.

And this is where we can pause.

Those clergymen intended to keep readers in ignorance so they can reach conclusions diametrically opposed to those which logic would lead them to. Earlier in this chapter we showed how clergymen ignored the purpose of momentous events and [the lessons of] ages, some of which we aspire to and wish to emulate and some of which we pray God will spare us their evils and sins. Ultimately, dear reader, you will find yourself in a bind: if matters go one way, you will be crushed for being ignorant of the purpose; and if matters go another way, you will be crushed by the intent of ignorance. Thus, the only thing you can do is flee from the fray, as I did, and remove your religion and your life far away from such ambitious fanaticism or fanatic ambition. I pray that God grant those clergymen guidance, and I pray for my safety. I hope that I may be spared from what they say and what they write. I pray that God save Islam and Muslims and uphold religion in mosques where God ordered His name should be spoken. I pray God that the voice of wisdom, not that of aspirations to government, be heard from the pulpit.

Chapter Two: Before the Fall

"How extraordinary it is that those whose hands are steeped in Muslims' blood concern themselves with the blood of fleas." Al-Hasan al-Basri

1. A Calm Discussion about a Hot Issue

"I profess that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger and prophet." This is the profession of anyone who is forced by an unfavorable climate to proclaim a pious slogan as an alternative to a patriotic slogan. It is the profession of anyone who gives a pious slogan precedence over a patriotic one to prove what needs neither proof nor confirmation. It is a necessary prelude to a confrontation with a tendency that finds it very easy to declare Muslims non-believers and describe those who disagree with it as apostates.

But let me first of all affirm my conviction that religion is a part of the Egyptian character. In fact, it is my judgment that religion constitutes Egypt's conscience and that it sets the tone for the decisions that are made in the

country. It is religion that is responsible for the tranquillity and depth that set the tone for the Egyptian character. It is thus quite different from the noisy and boisterous tone that strikes us in those whose approach to matters is rash, erratic and negative toward anything that differs from that which they believe is right. Such people represent a strong tide of opinion that is nurtured by a monolithic school of thought whose numerous opponents do nothing but retreat, observe silence and retreat even further. Those people learned their lesson from the story of the wolf whose head was cut off. They had called upon each other and advised each other to run for their lives. But this is neither here nor there. This has to do with me, an Egyptian citizen who is mourning the destiny of his country which is being forced by good intentions into a direction that God forbid I should call a future. There is neither a future nor a place in this age for a religious state. There is no room in a country for a religious state since a religious state would threaten that country's unity and destroy all manifestations or degrees of civilization it may have acquired over the years.

Calling for the application of Islamic law now is nothing more than a reaction to an outside factor. As usual, such reactions are violent and precipitous and may just be on the fringes of a correct response to an action. In my judgment that action is the 1967 defeat which set forth the possibility of Israel's victory, the victory of a religious state over regimes that represent the survival of a choice made by those regimes at the end of the past century to adopt a European-style civil government. That reaction may have been nurtured by an economic climate that was full of contradictions. This situation produced dissidents who were represented in a variety of groups which concurred that society ought to be renounced as non-Muslim. At the same time that reaction persuaded all of society to adopt an attitude of cultural alienation. Those who went overboard in attributing the October victory to divine power may have forgotten how much effort, knowledge and training went into achieving that victory. Those who swore that a host of angels marched ahead of the ranks of soldiers who crossed the canal may realize today the magnitude of the situation into which they forced society.

Those who are calling for the application of the canonical law of Islam immediately and without delay are making a statement at the same time that appears to be logical. They are making that statement in the face of anyone who opposes them in a mere discussion. This statement is set forth in the form of a logical question. Why are you afraid of the application of prescribed legal punishments in Islam? These punishments will only be applied to thieves, to people who are guilty of adultery, people who consume alcohol, to apostates or to people who do evil in the world. On the surface this is a question that seems unanswerable, but it is a question that hides a fact that I pray God will give me the power to clarify. This fact is that the application of Islamic law is not a partial matter associated with setting down a few legal punishments. It is rather a prelude to the inroads that will be made and that the advocates of the immediate application of Islamic law do not wish to clarify; or it is a prelude to those inroads whose real implications they misrepresent.

The application of Islamic law would necessarily lead us into a religious state; a religious state would necessarily lead to a government by divine right; and that is unknown in Islam. Or let's say it was known only in the days of the

prophet. Only clergymen can directly or indirectly establish government by divine right. The effects that everything which happened in the past have had and the inroads that were made would certainly lead to the collapse of national unity in Egypt. Any statement contradicting this logical correlation constitutes some kind of maneuver or at best a step into the unknown that despite the best of intentions is destined to have unfavorable consequences.

Let us take, for example, the application of the prescribed legal punishment for adultery. Let us imagine together what might happen as soon as that prescribed legal punishment goes into effect. People will exclaim, "How can we enforce that punishment when the nightclubs on al-Haram Street are open for business, when belly dancing is permitted, and when folk dancing, not to mention ballet, is recognized as an art?" All these questions seem logical, and it seems futile to find answers or justifications for them. But these questions only set the stage for what follows: an even more logical and a more persuasive question. If we have the right to stay away from the nightclubs on al-Haram Street or from theaters where folk dancing or ballet are performed, we cannot keep television (or the televaz so I would not offend anyone) out of our homes. We cannot keep ourselves from looking at the faces of female announcers who appear on the screen with uncovered heads and made up faces, wearing clothes that were unheard of in the early days of Islam. Aren't there men in Egypt who can do that job? And even if men were to appear on the screen instead of female announcers, some people will come up with new questions about the immorality of those announcers. It will be said that these announcers do not let their beards grow and that they trim their moustaches. As far as television programs are concerned, I will let the readers themselves read and find out what an Islamic magazine¹ had to say to explain what television programs in an Islamic society should be like.

1. We are not calling for television to be abolished; nor are we calling for radio stations to be shut down. Television and radio are blessings, but they turn into misfortunes when they are misused. Television and radio are double-edged swords. It would be a major mistake and a shame to turn them into blasphemous tools and thereby seal our people's fate.
2. Therefore, I suggest that broadcast hours be utilized to impart knowledge to the public and convey to them Islamic values and modes of conduct in a well-considered Islamic educational style that is both educational and recreational.
3. The best stories from the Koran and the tradition ought to be presented. Stories about our virtuous ancestors would be a fine alternative to present programs, provided they are presented in the style of the Koran and the tradition and not in the Greek style.
4. Debates, lectures, discussions, competitions and riddles are to replace programs such as those which are presently being offered. They are to be presented in a well-considered artistic manner that would attract viewers to the broadcasts. Movies about the wonders of creation and the marvels of divine creation may be shown without the use of forbidden music, and the restrictions of Islamic law, etc. would be observed.

1. AL-I'TISAM, December 1984.

5. All this is to be done in an Islamic context that is dignified, sedate and well-mannered. Such programs would manifest lofty values, a courteous disposition and Islamic conduct. Radio and television would thus become educational media that people would be anxious to turn to, and Islamic values would not be treated or dealt with lightly as subjects for radio and television programs. Programs would be presented in a manner consistent with Islamic values.

It is obvious that the foregoing review consists of nothing more than general statements that rely on broad, ambiguous terms such as dignified, sedate, courteous and Islamic conduct, and so on.

Some people may think that what was conceived and presented as an Islamic alternative to television programs in an Islamic state may allow the presentation of some dramatic programs that depict Islamic stories or at the very least convey some kind of religious exhortation in a dramatic framework that would help the public "stomach" a few of the broadcast hours and perhaps even enjoy them. But the previous article deems acting itself objectionable. Let's read together some of what the article had to say about acting. "Dramatic works, regardless of their content, are not at all an Islamic alternative. Acting is not an Islamic way by means of which radio or television broadcast hours can be programmed.

"First, all forms of acting are forms of pagan art, and the prophet, may God bless him and grant him salvation, prohibited us from acting like pagans.

"Second, a dramatic script is an example of falsehood in which the author's fancy creates incidents that his sick mind conceived of. Such situations have very little to do with the truth. The prophet prohibited us from lying, even in jest and to a child, as is reported in the prophetic tradition.

"Third, the fact that an actor takes on the personality of another is also an example of falsehood since that actor did not see the person whom he is trying to portray.

"Fourth, assuming another person's identity violates Islamic precepts. The prophet, may God bless him and grant him salvation, prohibited us from mimicking each other either to ridicule each other or to show our affection. However, Muslims are ordered to assist each other in life by following the prophet's example, may God bless him and grant him salvation.

"Fifth, psychology tells us that actors have unstable and degenerative personalities; they have a propensity for forgery, and their testimony is unacceptable. One sees that side of their characters in conflicting displays of conduct that indicate a lack of a sense of honor and self-respect."

If we were to overlook what was mentioned in the previous paragraph about the testimony of an actor being unacceptable, a few optimists might imagine that a few actresses might be allowed to appear on television programs, provided they do not wear too much makeup and they do not act in a vulgar fashion. However, we are soon told in the same article that "Having men play women's parts on television would be an abomination. But it would also be impermissible for women to appear in television programs in front of others and in settings that are prohibited by Islam. It is impermissible for them to act and speak in such

settings that allow men and women to socialize together since that would lead to moral depravity and violations of the law, such as marriage and divorce. This is a grave matter whether it is taken seriously or lightly. It would lead to conduct that has been forbidden by law, and all that would cause shameless conduct to become widespread among believers."

The author of the article leaves no room for discussion or debate on this subject. He concludes his article by saying, "Anyone who takes part in a dramatic work is damnable because the prophet, may God bless him and grant him salvation, said, 'Woe to those who tell false stories about the deeds and utterances of others to make people laugh. Woe to them! They are damned even though they entertain people'."

And so no sooner would we begin enforcing the legal punishment for adultery than we would find ourselves banning acting. We would do away with the actors' union, let all actors go, abolish the cinema and dramatic arts institutes, let female announcers retire from their jobs, shut down theaters and movies, prohibit coeducation in universities and prescribe an Islamic dress code for female citizens based on the formal legal opinions of those who have no qualms about using prophetic traditions such as those that were used in the aforementioned article. A cursory examination of the style of that tradition would be enough to cause one to question its authenticity.

This is one example of what will collapse in the world of art, and no one will be able to stop or oppose it. And we can speak at length about what could happen in the economy and in daily life. In fact, that raises an extremely grave question which has to do with the fact that advocates of the Islamic political tendency did not set forth a program regarding these issues. Instead, they set forth general and universally accepted expressions such as "blessing" and "poverty that comes with violating the laws of God." In fact, one of their leaders--I do not wish to mention his name lest someone think that my ideological position is based on personal animosity--stated after visiting the fraternal country of Sudan that Sudan was suffering from extreme poverty and difficult economic problems because it had previously strayed from God and His law. He said it is hoped that the application of Islamic law would turn the poverty of the Sudanese people into wealth and their hardship into ease. That honorable gentleman promptly added, however, that if Sudan's hardships were to continue and if the country were to become more impoverished, that would be the misfortune that God decreed for believers. The misfortune they would suffer in this world would be rewarded by God Almighty with blessings in the after life.

God have mercy! What kind of talk is this? Where is the logic or reason behind it? How can the wealth that the Sudanese people might gain in the future be their reward in this life while the poverty they might be afflicted with in the future be the misfortune they have to bear in this world as they seek the rewards of the hereafter?

I know that many people have good intentions when they advocate the ideas and practices that they do. In fact, some of them are moderate Muslims who think that it is possible for Islam to adjust to the age. They believe that God's tolerant religion, which calls for virtue and beauty, cannot possibly find music and song or statues that are placed in squares objectionable. If it did, we

would be destroying a vital part of our lives without which one cannot live. But let me affirm that those people will not speak out forcefully. In fact, I call upon them to describe how they are being treated by extremist Islamic tendencies simply because they have an opinion that is different from that held by those tendencies. And that is neither novel nor surprising. Islamic history is full of examples of people trying to appear more pious than others. But there will never be in our age a Muslim who understands Islam as well as 'Ali ibn Abu Talib did. Yet his knowledge and adherence to the faith did not keep others from embarking upon attempts to portray themselves as more knowledgeable and more pious than he was. In fact, 'Ali was killed by such people even as his great words were still ringing in people's ears, reminding them that "The purpose of this true statement is to deceive." And we can still hear that prophetic tradition reminding us that the course of religion is difficult and that we have to proceed on that course gently. And yet I have not seen any gentleness demonstrated by organizations such as the Holy War or Renunciation and Repudiation organizations; nor did I see in the past such gentleness demonstrated by the secret organization of the Muslim Brothers. In fact, I do not exaggerate when I say that for someone like me the only course I know is that of dialogue. I make no claim for leadership, but I do ask that I be steered into a clearly defined direction and not into the unknown by those who advocate a deliberate disregard of the facts or perhaps by proponents of ignorance.

And where do such people promote their opinions and beliefs? On the pages of national newspapers. I need only mention AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI which puts the representative of the National Party in the People's Assembly in a tight spot, placing him between those who advocate deliberateness in applying Islamic law--and that is a sensible approach stemming from a desire to protect Islam itself--and what the newspaper itself declares.¹ "We have been calling upon the state in each issue of AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI to apply Islamic law promptly. Nothing but the application of Islamic law can wipe out the contradictions that exist in society. This opinion is clear, unequivocal and absolutely irrevocable." This then is not a matter of a small minority of Muslim Brothers or a larger minority in the Wafd voicing their opposition in the People's Assembly. It is first and foremost a clear contradiction in the ruling party's policies and a clear, unequivocal and unambiguous invitation [to action] from one of its newspapers.

The question now is this: Do those who advocate such an approach know with certainty that this approach would lead to a religious state? I mentioned some of the features of such a state, but its most dangerous features may be found in what was published on the pages of this "national" newspaper. In the same issue AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI reported on a discussion that was held in the mosque of 'Aqabah ibn Nafi'. Dr 'Abd-al-Ghani al-Rajihi is reported to have said that "Jews are responsible for the three evils of human thought. Karl Marx, the author of 'Das Kapital' is the founder of communism, and he is Jewish. Communism is the product of Zionism and Judaism. The second Jew is Freud, who said that all human instincts can be attributed to the sex drive. And you know what the sex drive means: it is carnal passion. Freud thus denigrated human perfection to the lowest level. The third Jew is Darwin, and he said that man is descended from apes. He is the third member of that 'filthy' trio, and Judaism is the link that ties the three men together. Marx is a Jew; Freud is a Jew; and Darwin is a Jew."²

1. AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI, No 152.

2. The author cannot help but wonder at this statement since Darwin was a Christian, not a Jew.

Such a statement is dangerous because the judgment it makes on a school of thought is predicated on religious differences. This is a dangerous course. It is also obvious that in summarizing the thoughts of the three men Dr al-Rajihī used expressions that I will not allow myself to describe as ignorant. Out of courtesy, however, I will say that the expressions he used show a grave disregard for the facts and an even graver departure from the men's true ideas. One may even swear that he did not read a single word of these three men's theories. What is even more dangerous is the fact that he described those three great men in the history of human thought, regardless of how much we may disagree with them, as a filthy trio.

What would conditions be like then if we were living under a religious state such as that conceived by Dr al-Rajihī and those like him? I have no doubt that Marx's books would be banned; that Freud's theories would not be taught to students of psychology; and that Darwin's theory would be expunged from textbooks. Furthermore, it is certain that this "filthy trio" would be followed by a long list of "filth" that will include anyone whom the likes of Dr al-Rajihī wish to include in that list after describing their ideas in abhorrent terms.

Rhetorical statements made by worthy scholars summarizing major intellectual and philosophical issues may provide the model that the author of the editorial in the newspaper AL-I'TISAM hopes will abound in our radio and television programs as an alternative to the methods of the Greeks. I can almost swear that this and nothing else will be what prevails because everything else would be considered filth, and filth belongs in the fires of hell and not in the media.

This is the first inroad that would be made in calling for the immediate application of Islamic law, and I mean by that the establishment of a religious state. If intentions were good, such a matter must be preceded by discussion. I say this not because I accept or reject the notion of applying Islamic law but because discussing a matter before applying it would be the logical sequence of things. Thus, members of the People's Assembly who would be voting for or against such a proposal would know that they would be laying the cornerstone of a religious state. The application of Islamic law is not the whole issue; it is only part of one. Assembly members must learn all the particulars of that issue before taking a single step further. They must know that the application of Islamic law sets the stage for making inroads on the system, the first of which would be establishing a religious state that could lead to government by divine right. Such a government can only be run by clergymen, and that would lead to sectarian strife. But these are matters we will deal with in subsequent chapters.

2. Government by Divine Right

I made it clear in the previous article that calling for the immediate application of Islamic law undoubtedly sets the stage for establishing a religious state. This call is a highly intelligent response to those who maintain that we ought to begin by establishing an Islamic society. No sooner would we begin enforcing the prescribed legal punishments than innocent questions will be asked. How can we induce an individual to commit a forbidden act and then hold him accountable for it? And here it would be logical that one partial correlation after the other would be made. First, women would be forbidden to

appear in public with uncovered faces, and eventually licentiousness would be forbidden. This is a loose term that moderates could interpret as a ban against prohibited music, but hard-liners may wish to apply it to the uniforms of soccer players which leave portions of the players' bodies above the knee uncovered. All this would ultimately lead to the establishment of a religious state in Egypt. If such a state were established, it will have to comprise a political framework that will be based on a government by divine right. Such a government will not recognize man-made constitutions and laws. It will be a government that thinks the Koran and the prophetic tradition are the only source for political ideas. It will be a government that will recognize only two political parties: the party of God and that of the devil. Obviously, the party of God would be represented by those who govern in the name of religion and under its banner. The party of the devil, however, would be a party in name only; like the devil himself it will have no concrete, material or legal existence. There would be a prescribed legal punishment for those who stir up civil strife and who would be found guilty of committing wicked deeds in the world. This is an expression that is used to describe anyone who differs or disagrees with the members of God's party.

I may need to pause now to clarify a point that was made in the previous paragraph and that may cause some confusion. Some people may wonder, why should I be bothered if the Koran and the prophetic tradition were to become the only two sources for standards by which any action or conduct would be judged. I may be asked if I deny or object to such standards. If asked, I would say, "God forbid that I should deny them or object to them." But the matter is not that abstract and not that simple. It deserves to be discussed with deliberation. We have to review together some phenomena so that together we can reach conclusions, and we may or may not agree about these conclusions.

I can compile scores of articles that were written in the forties and fifties under different titles, and yet all these articles could be brought together under one title: "Capitalism is Islamic." I can also compile scores of articles and perhaps even a few books that were written in the sixties and that could be listed under one rubric: "Socialism Is Islamic." In both groups of articles we would find citations from the Koran and from authentic prophetic traditions supporting the one view or the other. We would also find that there are people who think that Islam has its own economic theory which is neither capitalist nor socialist. All this leads us to confirm an obvious fact, which is that the Koran, because it is a sacred book revealed for all ages, cannot be limited to one period of history. It can be flexible enough to accomodate developments and changes in the ways people do business and live. The Koran allows a great deal of freedom in matters that have to do with the affairs of our world. And herein lies the grave danger: the matter will depend on the views of those who interpret the Koran and their ability to interact with the material world with or without flexibility.

Let's use an example that may be clearer because it is something we are experiencing and because it is a moot issue. I am referring to the religious position on the peace treaties with Israel.

Al-Shaykh Salah Abu Isma'il presented his point of view on this question in the testimony he gave at the al-Jihad trial. His point of view does not differ much

from the Muslim Brothers' declared position as articulated by Mr 'Umar al-Talmasani. In the course of his criticism of President al-Sadat's policy,¹ al-Shaykh Salah says, "He asks for opinions on Camp David, and then goes beyond the limits of the legal provision. He asks for personal opinions and ignores the legal opinion. We saw the president normalizing relations with the Jews, the people who harbor the most animosity to believers. President al-Sadat claims he is concerned about the land and about sovereignty, but he accepted the Camp David Accords according to which Israel can exercise control to limit the size of our forces east of the canal. Israel controls where and how far these forces move on our land. He consented and allowed the Zionist state to have something to say about what kinds of airports we can have in Sinai. He accepted the internationalization of the Gulf of Aqabah even though it is less than a territorial body of water according to the Treaty of Constantinople. He permitted the Jews to come to Egypt whenever they want. Among the conditions he accepted was one which stipulated that no Palestinian could go to his country without the Jews' permission. He accepted the proposition that the Camp David Accords would prevail if they conflicted with other commitments. He allowed the Camp David Accords to prevail over the charter of the Arab League, over our ties with Muslims and over every commitment and pledge we made. He thus betrayed the blood of those who died in action. If he believes that what he did was free from sin, then he is a non-believer; and if he believes that what he did was wrong, then he is an errant sinner."

On page 147 of the same book five major scholars from al-Azhar presented their opinions on the same question. Their opinions, which came in a reply sent to the court, were as follows: "If we were to compare the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel--the Camp David Accords--to those principles of Islam that were firmly established in the Koran, set forth in detail in the prophetic tradition and elucidated by the scholars of all denominations, in the manner that has been referred to, we would find that the peace treaty is consistent with the provisions of Islamic law. In accordance with that treaty the Egyptian, Muslim territory of Sinai was restored to Egypt after its occupation by Israel since the 1967 war. Muslim citizens in Sinai have returned to Egypt and Egypt can now utilize Sinai's resources which were being depleted by the Jews in Israel."

Are we as Muslims being asked to regain our land and our resources, or are we forbidden from doing that? Do our efforts to regain our land and our resources assure us of advantages or would they bring about devastating evils? Did Islam order us to bring citizens back to their liberated land? Did Islam order us to bring citizens back to their country, Egypt, the country that can look after their educational, health and commercial affairs and even preserve their religion and fulfill all its responsibilities toward them? Does Islam ask us to do this, or does it forbid us from doing it?

When we look at this treaty in the light of the responsibilities of a Muslim ruler as seen by Muslim scholars, we would find that Egypt's former president advised the nation and carried out his responsibility. He protected Egyptian subjects, and he regained the land. When he found that there was no alternative to war, he prepared himself for war and he fought. But he negotiated and made peace when he saw that peace was inescapable and that justice could be achieved peacefully or through war."

1. "Al-Shahadah" [The Testimony] Dar al-I'tisam, p 63.

And here I ought to pause briefly since we are faced with two widely different opinions. They are in fact poles apart. According to one opinion, the ruler departed publicly from the precepts of religion; in fact, his life is forfeited if scholars try to steer him back to the proper path, but he insists on his opinion. Meanwhile, the other opinion on the same question affirms that the same ruler did advise the nation and did carry out his responsibility toward the people: he protected the subjects and regained the land. Both opinions are set forth by religious scholars, and both opinions are supported by texts from the Koran and the prophetic tradition. One of them goes so far as to declare the ruler a non-believer because he violated Islamic law, and the other raises him to a higher standard for upholding the law. Because we are still fortunate and have a civil government, we, the subjects, are allowed to hear and compare both points of view. We are allowed to ask ourselves a specific question: if this matter were up to the proponents of the former opinion, would the proponents of the second view be allowed to express their opinions? I do not wish to say what I think here so I would not be accused of favoring one point of view or trend of thought. But it is more likely that the proponents of the first opinion will be biased in favor of their opinion. Once stated, the matter is out of their hands; to them it becomes a legal judgment, and anyone who disagrees with them would be disagreeing with God's judgment on the matter. In a political sense a person who disagrees with them would be declaring himself a member of the devil's party. And since this would be a matter of God Almighty opposing the devil, it would be beyond debate or opposition. It would be interpreted as an act of denying divine judgment. Since proponents of the first view champion the opinion of God as they see it, they are entitled to bring about God's judgment on those who disobey His orders and disregard His interdictions. And there is nothing the others can do about being accused of depravity and injustice; that accusation confirms the tolerance of those who rule according to the laws of God and it paves the way for their repentance in front of clergymen. If they repent, they would be welcomed and blessed, and their example would become a lesson to others. But if they insist on their ways, then they would have clearly departed from the precepts of Islam, and may God Almighty then have mercy on them.

This business then has nothing to do with the Koran and prophetic tradition; nor does it have anything to do with accepting them or rejecting them. It is not a matter of faith or the lack thereof, nor is it even a matter of profound religious knowledge or religious ignorance. The two parties in this controversy are committed to the Koran and the true tradition and they accept their judgments on matters. Their faith in God is genuine and absolute. They are both free agents who have open minds and can make independent judgments freely, simply because they still live in a state that is governed by man-made laws that do not consider a difference of opinion a crime. These man-made laws do not regard opposing the ruler a departure from the faith, and they do not consider rejecting another person's opinion an infraction. Man-made laws do not regard the expression of a different independent opinion offensive. Such a system has never permitted the forfeiture of anyone's life; it does not ask an offender to repent; and it does not confuse human efforts with the judgment of Almighty God. This is and has been the bane of those who govern a religious state. Their actions which have nothing to do with the spirit of religion are unfortunately required by imperatives. This does in fact happen, not only in grave matters, but also, unfortunately, in the most trivial matters.

Islamic history after the orthodox caliphs is full of such situations. The storms stirred up by the caliph al-Ma'mun when he raised the issue of the Koran's authorship, which is a philosophic issue that many scholars may be unable to probe, may be the best example of that. Much blood was spilled, and many lives were lost; and Imam Ibn Hanbal was tortured and mistreated because he would not accept al-Ma'mun's opinion, which, according to al-Ma'mun, was no longer an opinion or an independent interpretation but rather a known religious fact. Thus, anyone denying it had to be tortured or killed. No ruler would ever pursue such a course unless he was certain that he was God's instrument, guiding those who disagree with what he believes to what is right. Such a ruler does not care about shedding blood, depriving a man of his freedom or taking away his life. In fact, he may regard such actions as his way of pleasing Almighty God. Is there more telling evidence than the fact that those who follow al-Ma'mun's style in government believe that they are ruling by divine right? The ruler of a religious state could become so confused as to think his own personal opinions comparable to the principles of the faith.

Read with me if you will al-Mansur's address--he was an Abbasid caliph--in Mecca. "O People! I am God's authority on His land. I govern you with His consent, His guidance and His support. I am the guardian of His riches, disposing of those riches according to His will and wishes and giving you of this wealth with His permission. It is God's wish that I serve as the keeper of His coffers: when He wants me to unlock those coffers to give you your portions in this life of His wealth, I do; and when He wants me to keep His coffers locked, I keep them locked." Read with me also if you will the history of many caliphs who ruled in the name of religion after the orthodox caliphs. And you may wonder with me in dismay when you discover that a Muslim could lose his life because of a line of verse and that he may be saved from death by an anecdote, a joke or by his deft wit. The executioner became indispensable to this nation's historical heritage, and a few executioners gained fame that exceeded that of some caliphs. We know, for example, the name of Masrur, al-Rashid's executioner, but we do not know the names of at least half of the Abbasid caliphs. In all cases I affirm that all this was due to those rulers' beliefs that they were ruling by divine right and that everything they believed was true Islam. They believed that everyone who disagreed with them was immoral or a non-believer. Islam is innocent of all of that. But this is the complex of a religious state which beguiles its rulers with worldly pride, and that is something that has absolutely nothing to do with magnanimous Islam.

The reader may have noticed that I am being cautious in what I write about the lives of the caliphs and that I wrote "after the orthodox caliphs." This is because I did not want the orthodox caliphs to be affected by the crimes committed by the caliphs who succeeded them. What is definite, however, is that there is a strong foundation for the theory of divine right to rule in what 'Uthman ibn 'Affan said when he was asked by rebels to abdicate. His reply firmly established the view of the divine right to rule among his successors. 'Uthman said, "By God, I will not abdicate. I will not relinquish something that God bestowed upon me." It is this statement that placed all of Islamic political thought at a crossroads between a majority that accepts 'Uthman's opinion, may God be pleased with him, that it is Almighty God Who puts the caliph in power, and a minority that thinks the nation is the source of power. According to 'Uthman's opinion, the subjects have no right to remove the imam from a position

in which God had placed him, but according to the other opinion, it was the nation that bestowed power, and the nation that took it away. This opinion was subsequently adopted by al-Mu'tazalah whose name may provide evidence of the Islamic state's stance toward them and of their attitude toward the Islamic state.

Once again I will try with the reader, God willing, to establish a link between this chapter and preceding and subsequent chapters. I stated that the call for the immediate and undelayed application of Islamic law constitutes a direct prelude to a religious state that will invariably be ruled by those who believe they will govern and make judgments by divine right. And here the logical question would be self-evident: who would be those rulers? The following chapter will make it clear that the self-evident answer to that question is clergymen. Clergymen will have to rule either directly or indirectly.

3. And Finally, the Apple Would Fall!

Based on the foregoing, the ripe apple would finally fall into the lap of politically active clergymen. The "foregoing," which I mentioned, is what I presented in two previous articles on the religious state and the divine right to rule. "The ripe apple" [is the fruit of the clergymen's efforts]: their direct or indirect involvement in government. The law of gravity, which is a natural law, would cause that apple to fall when it ripens. However, the clergymen's involvement in government is something that is being rushed by those who are calling for the immediate application of Islamic law. Clergymen would like to get their hands on that apple even though it may not yet be ripe; they are ready to catch it. They have been very carefully groomed by politically active prayer leaders who came upon the scene when other opinions were non-existent and when there was no real political activity on the scene. Egyptian political thought swung from a parliamentary democracy to a democracy with fangs, and politicians took part in forging that democracy and dallying with it because they were fond of their own safety. They wanted to avoid confrontation and they thought about the future. It did not matter that their actions belied their innermost thoughts, for after all, as the well-known play says, all this was being done at the proprietor's expense.

The bane of our political life is our inability to call a spade a spade. To be precise, let me say that we give things names that have nothing to do with their nature. Let's review together a story that is not denied by those who were involved in it. Some of those people are still living, and I pray they will be with us for many, many years. They may have a different version of one or another detail of the story, but in the final analysis this story is a true account of what happened.

In the early days of the revolution many of the free officers were associated with the Society of Muslim Brothers, which has been, according to its founder's wishes, a society and not a political party. The society's founder argued that he and his colleagues do not aspire to government office or to ephemeral worldly honor. Instead, their aim was to guide society to the path of truth. Their only concern was to develop a Muslim citizen and call for the application of the canonical laws of God. Many historians concur that some of the Muslim Brothers knew when the revolution would take place, and some of them think that the

Muslim Brothers supported the revolution by declaring their support for it as soon as it took place. Historians think that the perpetrators of the revolution wanted to return the favor to the Society of Muslim Brothers, so they asked its members to nominate two ministers to the cabinet. But a disagreement developed over the names of two ministers. While the Muslim Brothers insisted on their candidates, Mr al-Baquri accepted his nomination to the cabinet by the Revolutionary Command Council and left the society. Later, in an attempt to clear the air the Muslim Brothers set forth a condition for supporting the revolution: the Revolutionary Command Council was to present all its decrees to them, and they would issue an opinion on the extent to which these decrees complied with God's True Religion. They said they would be satisfied with that and that they had no desire to take part in government. They said that aspiring for the things of this world was not one of the objectives of men who have a religious calling. They said that carrying out the burdens and duties of government was not part of their agenda, since they have been and will continue to remain a society and not a political party.

It is not necessary to reiterate what is already known: the men of the revolution rejected that condition, and the relationship between them and the Muslim Brothers continued to be a love and hate relationship. Eventually, that relationship led to mutual violence and the incidents and horrors that ensued therefrom. But let me call attention to the contradictory proposal that the Muslim Brothers made to the men of the revolution. They do not want to govern, but at the same time they do not want decrees to be issued without their approval. They are a society and not a political party, but they require any political decree that is issued to have their approval. They refuse to serve in one or two ministries, but they ask that every minister send his decrees to them to get their seal of religious approval. They want to form a supervisory council on government and those who govern, and yet they view government positions as manifestations of ephemeral worldly honor!

This is a clear example of how clergymen would exercise indirect power in a civil government. And what would they do, we wonder, if we were to have a religious state and if they were to indicate to a civilian ruler--because they wish to have his support, at least temporarily--that he would become the Muslims' imam and that his decrees would be supported by Koranic texts and the confirmed, authentic tradition of the prophet? They would tell the ruler that he would thus be assured of society's loyalty and cohesion under his leadership. They would tell him that he would gain the subjects' obedience in this world and God's reward in the afterlife. They would tell him that whereas the state was a religious state and its decrees religious decrees, it would only be sensible to present those decrees to those who are in power. They would tell him that those people are in agreement on religious matters and that they would issue independent opinions on matters of their world according to the precepts of their religion. They would tell him that he should not fear their acquisition of real power since what they say is mere advice, which, according to some if not the majority of theologians, is not binding. Other theologians, however, think that such advice would be binding. They would tell him that he may agree or disagree with the opinion of influential clergymen and that he may follow his own opinion if he disagrees with them. They would tell him that the opinions of both groups would be backed and supported by authority.

It may have occurred to the reader while reading the previous chapter that what I mentioned about advice being binding or non-binding may imply some disdain for a controversial religious judgment. Such an implication may be inferred particularly from what I said about a ruler's freedom to adopt one opinion or another. God forbid that someone like me should take a religious principle lightly if it has been established by the consensus of theologians. I, however, see exactly the opposite of what the reader may see. The fact of the matter is that it is those people who are calling for the establishment of a religious state before settling this matter who scorn not only me but also all the people. It is self-evident and logical that they ought to settle this matter between them before asking us to follow them. Otherwise, their situation with us and ours with them would be like that of the blind leading the blind into uncharted territory whose dimensions they have not yet been able to determine with any certainty. In fact, the matter is even more complicated than that. If religious counsel were definitely binding, some of our neighboring Islamic regimes would have departed from the course of ruling in accordance with Islamic principles. And if religious counsel were not binding, then we can no longer be persuaded by what we are being called upon to do because, on the one hand, we believe in democracy and we believe that Islam is a just religion that does not conflict with current parliamentary democracy simply because that form of government is new to us and borrowed from the West. An enlightened Islamic thinker is above such modes of thought.

If only those who are devoting their efforts to attacking the pagan society and repudiating rulers or thinkers were to spend some of that effort on something more useful to Islam and to Muslims! If only they were to do something useful instead of wasting all that effort on sounding alarms, making threats and censuring and renouncing people! They could set forth a government program comparable to that which is set forth by political parties. That program, which they would all agree on, would be derived from the Koran and the tradition. If they were to do that, they would benefit Islam and the country. In fact, I am inviting them to set forth to us their view on something that is much simpler and easier. I invite them to tell us something about the form of government in Islam and its most salient feature: how a ruler assumes power. Is he elected, as was the case with Abu Bakr who was elected in Saqifah Bani Sa'idah? Is he appointed to inherit power, as was the case with 'Umar? Is he chosen by a specific group, as was the case with 'Uthman? Is he selected by most cities, or as it would be in our present situation, most governorates, as was the case with 'Ali? Does a ruler assume power by overpowering others with his sword, as was the case with Mu'awiyah? Or does he inherit it, as was the case with Yazid?

It is not the purpose of the foregoing discussion to pose a problem or create confusion. The examples I cited pertained less to religion and more to politics, which was the one and only subject of the foregoing discussion. And yet our purpose is ruined when matters are confused. The dilemma that advocates of religious politics or political religion--two sides of the same coin--create for themselves is this: if they reject all the foregoing and propose an alternate form of government instead, they would have proven to themselves that there is no Islamic rule associated with the early days of Islam for selecting a ruler. They would have thus cost a religious system of government the loss of one of its essential cornerstones. If, however, they were to choose one of the aforementioned forms of government, others would protest their choice and declare

their support for another form of government that applied to one of the other caliphs. At any rate, they would maintain their prestige and their credit as long as they adhered to religious practices and precepts. In both cases, however, it would be difficult to get a persuasive reply from them since it would be easier for them to ignore this matter altogether which essentially contradicts the discussion about the ripe apple with which we began this article.

In the final analysis, the aim of some of these people--and unfortunately they are the most vociferous--is one that haunts them in their dreams and dominates their imaginations when they are awake. It is that elusive vision that comes closer to them the more fearful those who can confront them become. I am talking about power: nothing else but power. Their aim is to have direct power, possibly as Khomeyni did. They aim to have power, either through an influential council--and that is possible--or through a parliamentary system in a religious state--and that too is possible. What matters is that they get closer to power which had eluded them for too long. What matters is that emphasis be placed on the demand to begin applying the canonical laws of Islam immediately and without delay. This would be the way they would use to achieve their long-sought objective. But what effect would that have on national unity, which is the gravest and most sensitive subject in these articles? That will be our topic of discussion in the following article, God willing and time permitting.

4. God Knows

God forbid that anyone should think I would defend Egypt's Copts! Dividing Egyptians into Muslims and Copts is detestable to me. To me, Egyptians are just Egyptians, and they will continue to be Egyptians until God inherits this earth and everything on it. And yet there are these aberrations in history when history deviates from its proper course here and there, but it soon comes back to its proper course because ultimately it is only what is proper that holds true.

When I speak in defense of something, I speak in defense of Egypt. I will not condone injustice for any Egyptian. I refuse to accept the proposition that one citizen have the right to testify because he is an Egyptian Muslim and another be denied that right because he is not a Muslim.¹ I also refuse to have the right to govern, to legislate, to serve in the courts or to defend the country given to one group of Egyptians and denied to another. Let me repeat: this is a country; it does not belong to one group and not to another. Now that we are on the verge of the 21st century, I cannot accept the notion that someone would call upon a group of Egyptians to refrain from taking the initiative to greet another group of Egyptians. I cannot accept the notion that someone would call upon one group of Egyptians to harass the other group if they should meet. I cannot accept such an admonition on the grounds that it is based on a prophetic tradition when the authenticity of that tradition is doubtful and its lines of attribution are weaker than the threads of a spider web. I cannot accept the claim that the October War was a religious war between Muslims and Jews. The

1. This is what Mr al-Hamzah Di'bis stated in AL-NUR, citing the testimony of Mr Ibrahim Faraj in his book about Mustafa al-Nahhas.

only thing I will accept is that it was a war between Egyptians and Israelis. It was in that war that the blood of Muslim Egyptians was mixed with the blood of Coptic Egyptians. The only reason both Muslims and Copts were fighting was to defend Egypt. Muslim Egyptians lost their lives, and their families laid them to rest as martyrs; and Coptic Egyptians lost their lives, and their Coptic families laid them to rest as martyrs too.

It is a most splendid thing when the two religions unite to acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice of those who were defending our dear country. But what we have here is a sickness of the heart; what we have is narrowmindedness and stupidity that could lead the entire country to ruin. Is there anything more ruinous than for fellow countrymen to become divided because they resent each other? Is there anything more ruinous than for countrymen to become involved in civil strife, as some of them see themselves as oppressed while some see others as oppressors? And yet if one were to look at matters closely and examine the situation with scrutiny, one would find that nothing in this situation has to do with religion or faith. Instead, one would find that this is a matter of politics. It is a rugged and difficult course built by politicians who do not care at all about the country's future as long as they can get one vote here or there. It is a rugged course built by political clergymen who do nothing but proclaim slogans and do not concern themselves with setting forth programs or particulars; the only thing they care about is toying with people's emotions in the absence of the voice of reason.

Ye who cry and moan for Islam: cry and moan no more! Islam is alive and well. The only danger to Islam comes from you when you compel the young and inexperienced to drop out of the university because its modern sciences are secular. The danger to Islam comes from your efforts to fill young people's heads with superstition, the least of which is that thunder is the fart of a great devil! You tell them that women lead us into evil and that all society is ignorant and foolish. And God only knows that you are the most ignorant and most foolish among all Muslims. Islam has been and will always be the religion of knowledge and reason. It would be better for Islam and for Muslims if people were to study biology, physics and chemistry and spend no time studying what religion has to say on cupping, on the case of someone who frees a slave who has money, or on the case of someone who sets an illegitimate child free. It would be better if people were to study the modern sciences rather than the case of someone who has been dyed yellow or the matter of women wearing capes. It would be better for Islam and Muslims if young people were to study the sciences rather than interdictions against stirring up unrest in Ethiopia [or treatises about] putting out fires at night, cauterization, snuff, magical incantations, antidotes and leeches.

The fact that members of al-Jihad organization find no other way to raise funds for their organization but rob jewelry stores owned by Copts, killing the owners and seizing their property, has nothing to do with Islam. I do not want to go on at length in this vein so as not to inflame a healing wound. But this was the independent opinion issued by someone who deserves to have us scream in his face and exclaim, "What Islam is this?" Islam has never been a religion of terrorism. There was nothing Islamic about killing a citizen who was sitting peacefully in his store. There was nothing Islamic about killing a man and depriving his children of their father; there is nothing Islamic about destroying homes for no

other reason than that those people subscribe to a religion different from your own. Homes were destroyed and an Egyptian citizen lost his life because the leader of a religious group made an erroneous independent judgment and a mistake.

Someone like me has to be saddened and distressed when he reads this strange statement by Dr Ahmad 'Umar Hashim.¹ "Islam does not prohibit Muslims from doing business with non-Muslims, but it prohibits them from having close friendships with non-Muslims because close friendships can exist only between Muslims." No sir, not at all: close friendships can exist between Egyptians whether they are Muslims or Copts. It makes no difference. To say otherwise is to create disunity and division among Egyptians.

Someone like me has to be saddened and distressed when it is proclaimed that an Indian Muslim would be closer to an Egyptian Muslim than an Egyptian Copt. That is not true at all, and it will never be true. Egyptians, and I mean all Egyptians, are distinguished by the love they have for their country and the loyalty they feel for their land. To say anything else is to have an ulterior motive, a sickness in the heart, evil intentions, a grim view, and no patriotism. To say anything else is a major offense against the country.

God only knows who is behind this vicious attack which is creating disunity among the ranks, dividing the groups, frustrating our people and breaking up our solidarity.

God only knows.

Is it the clergymen who won seats in parliament and are dreaming of government positions? God knows.

Is it the prayer leaders in mosques whose cassette tapes are now competing with those of popular singers on the charts? In those tapes prayer leaders denounce and repudiate others. They warn of painful torment; they warn everyone about hell; they chase everyone to a place from which they cannot escape; and they paint a picture of gloom and doom. They say that every comfort will come to an end and every fortune will be ruined, and they affirm that good things do not last. They exclaim, "O, ye who are duped by safety and security, how many kings did you salute and how many rose only to fall to their deaths?" And they go on and on with such cant. God only knows.

Is it our virtuous neighbors who stand behind this vicious attack? I am referring to those neighbors who find it hard to see Egypt become a haven of stability and national unity in the middle of the entire region. Furthermore, Egypt is and deserves to become such a haven of civilization. Its citizens yearn for it, and they dream of its air and of the congenial relationship that exists in it between the secular and the religious. Those neighbors find that hard to take so they take an oath to drag Egypt backward by portraying the lives of our ancestors in a beautiful light. Those neighbors are dreaming of breaking up the country's unity by stirring up civil strife. They think that there is a cure for every ailment, and civilization's ailment is also its cure: it is money, in dollars or riyals. God only knows.

1. AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI, No 153.

Or is this vicious attack being backed by one of the superpowers which thinks that having the entire area fall into the grip of backwardness would serve its interests? Everything then would collapse and working for progress would become heretical and misguided activity. The only thing that superpower would have to do is to push Egypt onto that road; all the other countries would then follow Egypt's lead. This superpower may be doing this because it wishes to attack its principal enemy, or it may wish to drag the entire region into the murkiness of sectarian strife, making it unable to stand on its own feet until the 22nd century. Or it may be doing that to force minorities in the region to seek its assistance and establish complete ties of loyalty and affiliation with it when there is no other hope for them. The superpower may be behind all this because ultimately, the only alternative to this situation is unequivocally a military alternative in which citizens would find hope and a way out. God only knows!

The only thing I do know--and this is something that everyone must face because it is known to everyone just as it is known to me--is that a religious state that is ruled directly or indirectly by clergymen--and this is inevitable as I previously mentioned--will set the stage for sectarian strife. It may even tear up the country's unity.

Gentlemen, let's not fool ourselves. The question of religious government is not a question of a majority and a minority. It is rather a matter of consensus.

Gentlemen, let's not make false statements. Not all enlightened Muslims and not all Copts will find religious government acceptable. You may find one Copt here or there who might welcome a religious state, but he will be the exception to the rule. And you may find a clergyman who may welcome a government run by clergymen, but he will be an exception. And you may find a professional politician who proclaims religious slogans, but his conduct is opportunistic, short-sighted and indicative of his lack of awareness because he himself could become one of the first victims of that which he is pushing society into.

Gentlemen, you have every right afterwards to do anything you wish. This is your country as much as it is mine. But I swear to all of you that I will not stop opposing this matter as long as I live. I will not leave this matter alone as long as I can breathe. My conviction that all these claims are political claims in religious garb and not religious demands in political garb will remain firm and unshakable. I will not tire of telling you that this course will lead to civil strife. Cursed be those who stir it up, and may God protect Egypt from its dangers.

God knows that my love for Egypt is endless. God knows that my love for Egypt will last as long as I live. I love this country with everything in my being, and I would give my life to maintain and preserve its unity and solidarity.

God only knows that I speak truthfully and sincerely. God knows that I do.

5. And There Is Humor Too!

It would not be inappropriate after the previous articles if the reader were ready for a little humor. What a poet said about all evil not being the same applies here. It would not be at all extraordinary if I described what I am about to write as humorous and then as evil. A wise Arab put matters in their proper perspective when he said that the worst misfortune is ludicrous.

Imam al-Ghazali and al-Basbusah

It may have occurred to you that I overstepped my bounds when I linked the name of a great imam like Imam al-Ghazali who wrote the book, "Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din" [Reviving Religious Subjects] with the eastern dessert dish, al-basbusah. But please bear with me until you've read the whole article. Someone like me would not do that. Someone like me does not think there is a relationship between Imam al-Ghazali and any kind of dessert. In fact, had I associated the imam with a dessert dish, I would have gone beyond the boundaries of humor; I would have been guilty of poor taste. But let me tell you a story that alarmed me as much as it will alarm you. It is a story that surprised me as much as it will surprise you. It surprised a respectable man and a virtuous scholar before us; he is Dr Zakariya al-Barri, former minister of religious trusts. Dr al-Barri published a book entitled, "Ayyuha al-Sadah, al-Salamu 'Alaykum wa Rahmah Allah" [Gentlemen, May the Peace of God and His Mercy Be with You]. As chairman of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs he relates that he had invited a group of elite scholars and professors of religion to celebrate the anniversary of three unforgettable Muslim scholars: Imam Muhammad 'Abduh, Imam Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Imam al-Ghazali. These committees met, and they probed the history of those imams and their works. They reviewed their honorable services to Islam; they reviewed their unforgettable works; and they decided to commemorate them in a manner that would be suitable to their contributions. Their suggestions for commemorating the three imams may be summarized in three items: sadd al-hanak, kishk al-fuqara' and al-basbusah.

Before your jaw drops in amazement, let me cite one of Dr Zakariya al-Barri's speeches in which he relates what happened. That speech was published in the aforementioned book.¹

Dr al-Barri says, "What would people say about the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs if I were to tell you that council's resolutions and recommendations regarding the committees I formed within the council to commemorate Imam Muhammad 'Abduh, Imam Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Imam al-Ghazali? What would you say about me and about the council if I were to announce these resolutions to you? These resolutions were as follows: First, Imam Muhammad 'Abduh's committee. That committee met numerous times, and its members, who are distinguished Islamic thinkers who admire Imam Muhammad 'Abduh, discussed the matter. After a lengthy discussion they came out with the following recommendations which I announce as council chairman. All people in cities and villages, the old and the young, men and women, shall celebrate the anniversary of Imam Muhammad 'Abduh on such a day of a certain month. Everyone shall celebrate the occasion by eating the well-known dessert dish of sadd al-hanak.

1. "Ayyuha al-Sadah, al-Salamu 'Alaykum wa Rahmah Allh," by Dr Zakariya al-Barri, p 320.

"That was the decision reached by the committee to commemorate Imam Muhammad 'Abduh. Imam Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's committee also met and its members had a discussion like that which takes place among thinkers. The committee decided unanimously that all of us, the young and old, men as well as women, shall celebrate Imam al-Afghani's anniversary in cities and in villages. The committee decided that anniversary shall be celebrated on a certain day by serving and eating a well-known dessert dish called kishk al-fuqara'.

"But the committee that was to commemorate Imam al-Ghazali decided after a lengthy debate and unrestricted discussions that all Muslims in cities and villages, the old and the young, men as well as women, shall celebrate the anniversary of the imam's birth on a certain day by serving and eating the dessert, al-basbusah.

"What will people say about me, about the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and about these committees? They will most certainly say, 'The chairman of the Supreme Council and the members of these committees have suddenly gone mad. Such an association between the celebration and these desserts is unreasonable and makes no sense at all'."

I think, dear reader, that you and I would be entitled to pause briefly and to smile a lot. We have a right to be amazed--or if you want to be more specific, to mourn. We have a right to talk about what happened on three levels--even though it is my opinion that what happened does not deserve to be talked about.

The first level of our discussion would deal with the discrepancy between the positions of those who sat on those committees, and I do not wish to mention their names; the numerous meetings they attended; the boisterous discussions that took place in their midst; and the recommendations that came out of those meetings. This is certainly a case of much ado about very little!

The second level of the discussion would deal with what could happen if the state were to accept these recommendations and go along with what they call for. Consider what could happen if the state were to go into every city and village and undertake the task of preparing al-basbusah dishes on the day that was designated to commemorate Imam al-Ghazali's memory, for example. Thousands of tons of sugar, animal shortening or flour would be consumed. Just imagine how much consolation and fitting advice people will get out of such a commemorative exercise which would be completely at odds with the history of the great imam who was a profound and learned man even though he was not delicious. Imam al-Ghazali could sharpen one's mind even though he could not fill one's stomach. At any rate, he was not easy to digest.

On the third level of the discussion we could imagine together what things might be like if the virtuous gentlemen who serve on these committees were the ones organizing our national celebrations in that religious state they are calling for. These virtuous gentlemen regard the application of the canonical law of Islam as the way to a religious state.

Molasses candy would mark our celebration of the anniversary of 6 October, and rahat loukoum would mark our celebration of Suez Day!

All our days will become sweet, and the position of the minister of supply in the new state will become one of the most important positions. He would be the one who organizes the state's intellectual affairs. He would have the power to promote the memory of some people and downplay that of others as long as he holds in his hands the key to the pantry where the state's sugar, flour and animal shortening are stored. It will become normal for a native Egyptian of little education to greet his friend by telling him, "Good morning, my friend, what a honey of a friend you are!" And the other would reply, "You flatter me too much, my friend. How can you compare me to Imam Bukhari?"

What a state of affairs this would be! There is no power and no strength save in Almighty God!

Confucius a Muslim?

In the religious section of UKTUBAR Magazine, one of our respectable national publications, Mr Ibrahim Misbah published an article entitled, "Al-Islam Qanun Waqi'i lil Mujtama'" [Islam Is a Realistic Law for Society]. The article appeared on page 50 of the issue dated 6 January 1985. Mr Misbah wrote in that article, "As I was skimming through the pages of a book, I found a word of wisdom by Confucious, the Chinese sage. The translation of that statement was as follows: 'When ancient rulers wanted Islam to thrive in the world, they tried first to reform their own country. But before they reformed their country, they reformed their families, and before they reformed their families, they reformed themselves. Before they reformed themselves, they tried to be sincere and true in their thoughts, and they tried to see things as they really were'."

It seems that Mr Misbah takes our memory of history quite lightly. I do not think, of course, that he would not know that Confucious died more than 1,000 years before the birth of Islam. Furthermore, Mr Misbah talks about Islam as though it were the religion of ancient rulers, ancient as far as Confucious himself was concerned! Praise the Lord for such longevity!

As I read the foregoing, I was reminded that the poet, Hafiz Ibrahim, who was well-known for his wit and sense of humor, had been surprised to see the two distinguished politicians, 'Adli and Rushdi, praying together. It seems that praying together was some sort of official duty that took the distinguished poet by surprise. He commented on the incident in two lines of verse:

"'Adli and Rushdi praying? Indeed, wonders never cease!

"May God keep Fu'ad until Allenby kneels to pray."

Allenby was the British commissioner at that time. We too may pray God to keep Mr Misbah until Buddha too should come along with something to say about the greatness of Islam.

Chapter Three: Those Who Play with Fire

"Kingship is an honorable and enjoyable position. It affords one the enjoyment of all the world's blessings aswell as its physical passions and psychological rewards. That is why in most cases a king's position becomes the object of rivalry and contention. It is a rare occurrence for one to turn that position over to its rightful owner voluntarily without being overpowered and forced to do so." Ibn Khaldun's Prologue

1. Our Lord Who Art in Al-Jizah¹

It is my misfortune in this world that our lord and master, al-Shaykh Salah Abu Isma'il has had me in his thoughts. He has ranted and raved and threatened me with great torment. Nor did he forget to call upon his tremendous resources in selecting provocative phrases and resounding statements to describe my protest over the great victory he scored when he assumed leadership of the new Wafd and led the party into an alliance among whose victims he thought I had fallen. The fact is that it is the principles of the Wafd that have fallen victim to this alliance.

Our lord and master set out to compare me with salt when placed on fire. In other words, he wanted to say that I explode with anger and fly off the handle. At the same time, what he said was a very eloquent substitute for the colloquial, "Drop dead!" Let me, being in possession of all my faculties, attest here that he is absolutely right. I am in fact sad, frustrated and hurt, but not because he succeeded in leading the Wafd into a direction opposite that which I had tried to lead that party into, and not because he stayed in the party while I preferred to resign immediately. I am sad, frustrated and hurt for another reason that may not have occurred to him. He has hurt me in what I hold dearest. He has hurt Egypt, that great country without which my existence would be meaningless. I know of nothing that has priority or takes precedence over my sense of affiliation with Egypt.

Al-Shaykh Salah will most certainly laugh as he reads those last statements. A person who advocates Egyptian nationalism to him is one of two things: he is either someone who traces his ancestry back to the pharaohs, God forbid; or he is someone who does not accept al-Shaykh Salah's exalted statement which makes a Muslim in India closer to a Muslim in Egypt than a Christian Egyptian is. This statement divests Egyptian nationalism of its meaning and makes those who proclaim slogans of Egyptian nationalism and national unity, like Sa'd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahas, mere dissidents who disagree with the ideas of the venerable shaykh. They are people who have broken away from the principles of the new, authentic Wafd Party.

What al-Shaykh Salah knows yet claims not to know is that Egypt is being pushed into choosing one of two models that have been tried in the region. It is international colonialism and international Zionism that are pushing Egypt to choose either the Iranian or the Lebanese model or both, just as long as the first choice would set the stage for the second choice or vice versa. But al-Shaykh Salah and those like him are being asked to confront the other possible choice forcefully and sternly. That other possible choice is the Egyptian choice. Al-Shaykh Salah and those like him are being asked not to hesitate to use the strongest terms in describing that choice. They could describe the rationale for the Egyptian choice as that of monkeys, and they could threaten to trample it underfoot. They could also suggest that those who favor that choice are to be repudiated, and they could accuse them of apostasy. They could affirm that supporters of that choice are non-believers who have no respect for religion and no loyalty for the faith.

1. Published in AL-MUSAWWAR on 11 May 1984.

Politicians in Egypt remain unaware of that danger, and intellectuals in Egypt remain silent in most cases. Meanwhile the shaykh and his supporters can tear apart those who voice even a diffident protest to any particular detail in their ideas. The smallest charge leveled against them is that of apostasy. These charges carry a veiled threat which has become widespread among those who adopted such ideas from statements about shedding blood and permitting the killing of others to defend those leaders' directions.

Egyptian political parties are preoccupied with the question of democracy, the election law and the judgment that is to be reached on the events of recent or past history. They are thus oblivious to that danger which could cause the whole ship and those on it to sink. Furthermore, some statements by the shaykh and his supporters are repeated to arouse the people's emotions and attract their votes. Thus, since politicians in Egypt remain oblivious to the danger and intellectuals maintain their silence, the greater part of that plan has in fact been achieved. It is the dream of our lord and master, the shaykh in al-Jizah, to move from the village of Taharmas to Cairo, the capital of the new Islamic caliphate. To his right will be Masrur, the executioner, and behind him will be a procession of non-Muslim and secular prisoners. That procession would wind its way to Cairo as the sounds of gunfire resound in Cairo's skies, the skies of a city whose streets would be decorated with amulets and talismans. This dream is now almost imminent.

The tragedy of Egypt lies in the fact that we do not call things as we see them. We become preoccupied with trivia, not with significant matters. We forget that the land on which we stand is not stationary and that it is moving backwards, not forwards. And this is reason for distress and sorrow. The only thing we can do is let the light shine in and create every possibility for dialogue.

The alliance that has now been forged in Egypt between the Muslim Brothers and the leaders of some Islamic groups and members of some religious organizations, such as al-Jihad and Islamic Liberation on the one hand, and the Wafd on the other, is one part in a series of connected episodes. This series began with the incident at the Military Technical College; it was followed by al-Shaykh al-Dhahabi's incident, the platform incident and the alliance that is being forged now. That alliance poses the gravest of dangers to Egypt's future.

The principal characteristics of that series of episodes manifest themselves in the following:

First, this series of episodes presents variations on the same theme: the theme of changing society's course and creating a religious state that would be ruled by those who see themselves as the guardians of religion. They look at the future from a narrow, one-sided perspective that is both extremely fanatic and extremely backward.

Second, although the tunes may be different, all the tunes are derived from the same theme. Although the first three incidents bore the sounds of violence, the recent tune or theme is one that is calm and soft. What links all these themes together is the belief shared by those who harp on them and know them. They believe that the political mainstream will certainly respond to them and will be

won over. They believe that an appeal to people's emotions can be made and that people can be persuaded to support that tendency.

Although the first three attempts to bring about change were made by using violence, the aim of the recent attempt that is being made is to bring about violence through change. In other words, while the first three attempts used terrorism to deal a blow to the legitimate government, the aim of the recent attempt is to bring about terrorism by legitimate means. In all cases the outcome would be the same.

Third, what goes on in al-Shaykh Salah's mind and in the minds of other ambitious men is that there is a vast Islamic political movement that is divided into various and sundry groups. That movement needs a leader who can bring those scattered factions together and create from them a strike force that, by virtue of its intellectual and cultural makeup, would not recognize the values, ideas and legal frameworks that society has accepted. Al-Shaykh Salah found what he was looking for among the Wafd's leaders when he formed an undemocratic alliance with them within the party. He was thus able to place the names of some of these groups' leaders at the top of the party's list of candidates, enabling them to gain seats in parliament under a legitimate cover and under his personal leadership. Al-Shaykh Salah is thus the architect of that victory. If that victory materializes, it will come about under the influence of interrelated factors including the Wafd's popularity, the desire for change, the method of electing representatives by proportional lists and, finally, the popularity of those leaders in their electoral precincts.

This group would then become more vociferous in the assembly than any other group because, after all, they repudiate people and do not warn them. If the head of state disagrees with them, he would be declared a non-believer who does not belong in government. This group would reject banks because they employ usury; coeducation in universities because it is immoral; and the participation of women in the People's Assembly because it is a blatant violation of religion. This group would hold that no discussions were to be held with a Coptic minister because his service in that position was unlawful. These people would want to establish a dress code for women; they would hold that the sound of a woman's voice would tempt men to sinful conduct; that a partisan system is heretical; that concerts were exercises in shameless conduct; and that philosophy led people astray. Those who oppose them in the assembly would be considered iniquitous, sinners or apostates.

Fourth, it is misleading to protest and say that representatives of extremist political Islamic tendencies were elected to their seats in the People's Assembly. We must all recognize that we are charting an unknown course on a recently formed river whose course has not yet been fixed. The currents of that river have not yet been stabilized, and its banks have not yet been finally defined. In view of that fact, talking about diving competitions in such a river seems to be politically immature or misleading.

The ideological characteristics of most of our political parties have not yet been determined. Without going into details or getting embroiled in ideological battles, let me say that most of these parties are striving to collect contradictory views under their banners, claiming Nasirism one time, religious

extremism sometime and liberalism another time. Political observers are bewildered by that phenomenon and can only conclude that what they are witnessing is a process in which new political parties and forces are being born and their ideological characteristics are becoming clearly and unambiguously defined.

It is therefore imperative that there be unanimous agreement on minimal rules for the political game. Such agreement is necessary for the question of democracy; it is necessary for the choice that has to be made between the ways of our ancestors and contemporary ways; and it is necessary so we can set up our ideological defenses against those eastern winds that are blowing from Iran and carrying with them the dust of inflexibility and backwardness. And it is also necessary for setting up our defenses against those northeasterly winds that are blowing from Lebanon and bringing with them the rains of sedition and the clouds of sectarian strife.

2. Egypt Is and Will Remain an Egyptian Country ¹

Al-Shaykh Salah Abu Isma'il and his supporters, who infiltrated the Wafd despite that party's principles with the knowledge of its leaders, have been busy writing and distributing two statements on the elections. Every Egyptian should take the time to consider these statements and do something about them.

The title of the first statement was "Ashab al-Aydi al-Mutawadi'ah ... Limadha?" [Why should We Have People Whose Hands Are Clean?]. The substance of that statement constitutes a bold and big step taken by the honorable shaykh to divide the country under religious slogans.

It has been al-Shaykh Salah's custom to divide Egyptians into Muslims and free non-Muslims. But because everything changes, al-Shaykh Salah took a new step. He divided the Muslims themselves into two groups. The first group is made up of those whose hands are clean; and the reader does not need a whole lot of intelligence to figure out for himself the kind of people who make up the second group or the condition of their hands! I may summarize my comment on that statement as follows:

First, al-Shaykh Salah and his supporters have not changed their methods of confusing the issues. When addressing the electorate, they talk to them about politics in religious terms. Although their essential purpose is worldly, they speak in the manner of continent ascetics; their intent is to create division within the ranks by using slogans about religious solidarity.

Second, al-Shaykh Salah forgets that the statement he issued is a statement on the elections that is supposedly addressed to all Egyptians, regardless of their religious affiliations. The purpose of that statement is to make an appeal to voters for their support in the People's Assembly elections. A candidate's success in such an election would be measured by the sincerity of his patriotism and not by his proper performance of the ritual ablutions before prayer.

1. This article, which was written on 15 May 1984 and submitted to a weekly magazine, was turned down by the magazine's editor-in-chief and was not published.

Assembly members are evaluated according to how well they study problems and how competent they are in proposing solutions. Assembly members are not judged by their ability to repudiate others and cast doubts about their beliefs.

Third, al-Shaykh Salah is proving once again that he is at odds with the party to which he claims to belong.

Sa'd Zaghlul was a leader for all Egyptians because he was a great champion of the country's independence and not because he performed the ritual ablutions before prayer properly. Mustafa al-Nahas was an Egyptian leader inasmuch as he believed in democracy and national unity, and not because he performed his religious duties, which he did perform. What comes first here is faith in an Egyptian political issue, for which a leader would be held accountable in this world to parliament. What comes second, however, would be one's faith in God, and that is a private issue for which a person would be held accountable to God in the hereafter.

Fourth, I do not need to remind al-Shaykh Salah that the only terrorism Egypt has experienced was perpetrated by those who claim to have clean hands. The fact that they performed the ritual ablutions and washed their hands did not deter them from steeping their hands in the blood of fellow Muslims and fellow Egyptians.

I am calling upon al-Shaykh Salah to put an end to his classifications and his rhetoric. I want him to realize that he is rowing against the tide, not with it. Egypt's tolerance and national unity will not allow a pied piper or a rhymester to lead the country into disunity. Egypt's ideas and culture will not allow the country to retreat in the face of those who advocate sectarian fragmentation, no matter how sharp and painful the threats of repudiation and apostasy may be. Egypt's civilization and history will neither shrivel nor shrink, no matter how vociferous al-Shaykh Salah's supporters become in their staged elections propaganda. They may cry and moan for Islam as though Islam were in a predicament, and they may proclaim Egypt an Islamic country again and again. However, Egypt has been and still is a country that is Muslim, Coptic, Arab, Pharaonic, African and Mediterranean. The story of Egypt is a great historical saga fashioned by the natives of a land whose profound faith is their most distinguishing characteristic and whose tolerant patriotism is their most splendid accomplishment.

Let al-Shaykh Salah then play his pet tunes and melodies, but let us oppose him by revealing the truth about these tunes, which are imported from Iran to benumb and stupefy the faithful and well-intentioned public who do not realize that these tunes and melodies are a well-considered prelude to a gloomy, funereal march.

Although I recognize that the political scene in Iran is different from the political scene in Egypt, and although I recognize also that Shi'ite practices in Iran are different from Sunni practices in Egypt, I still think that the similarity is considerable between what happened in Iran and what is happening now in Egypt, and that includes what al-Shaykh Salah and his supporters are calling for.

The Iranian Revolution began in the pulpits of Iran's mosques when Iran's prayer leaders and mullahs challenged the ruling authorities and accused them of deviating from religion. They criticized political problems under the cover of religious activity. Thus, their call for civil disobedience became a kind of command to do what is good and equitable, and the directives they issued to destroy the state's system became a kind of proscription against reprehensible conduct.

The objective was obvious: they wanted to establish a religious state.

And the method was unequivocal: they confused political and religious issues.

The way to reach the devout people was obvious. They could be reached by speeches delivered from the pulpit; these were recorded on cassette tapes and circulated among the plain and ingenuous people who are oppressed and enraged by social injustice. The use of well-considered statements in these speeches would make it possible to persuade the people that the destruction of existing institutions would be their fastest way to gain a reward in the hereafter.

The emphasis in Iran's political scene was placed on the young for whom the near future held no promise of hope or security. To them everything was the same, and the idea of pushing all of society into collective suicide appealed to them. Iran's quadrangle of terror was thus completed: an imam seeking leadership; political prayer leaders in the mosques; a problem-torn setting; and young adventurers who had no hope for a future and who found the idea of risking the country's future appealing. When that quadrangle was completed, everything collapsed. Intellectuals could not help themselves at all, nor were they able to ward off that terror which was coming out of their country. They had already been defeated a long time ago when they preferred silence and did not speak out. Those intellectuals were defeated when they chose to retreat inside their shells and did not confront the opposition.

So much for Iran. What about Egypt?

Let's review together the second bulletin that is being distributed to voters by al-Shaykh Salah and his supporters. Al-Wafd's newspaper had referred to that bulletin on its front page. This is a bulletin signed by 10 scholars from al-Azhar and presented to the honorable Shaykh of al-Azhar asking him to intervene to repeal those laws that the scholars think impede Islamic missionary activity. This is the law that forbids the use of religion to promote extremist ideas whose aim is to imperil social peace or national unity. It is a law that forbids prayer leaders from criticizing or offering advice to any public administration.

The bulletin is nothing more than a blatant protest over the fact that the most important side in the Egyptian quadrangle which is being sought--the political prayer leaders in mosques--is missing.

The fault with the advocates of that quadrangle lies in their belief that the Egyptian people have a very poor memory even though our experience with that which they want to restore is not that distant.

It has not been that long ago since imprecations against the head of state and the regime were heard from the pulpits in the mosques.

It has not been that long ago since we heard authors being discredited and artists repudiated from the pulpits in the mosques.

It has not been that long ago since we heard attacks against our fellow Copts and remarks discrediting their beliefs in the mosques.

Is al-Shaykh Salah advocating the restoration of all that?

A person who stands in the pulpit and talks about politics is confusing his political opinion with the sanctity of religion in whose name he speaks from the pulpit. At the same time he is depriving citizens of their inalienable right to respond or oppose him, if what the prayer leader is advocating differs with that citizen's personal opinion or conflicts with his position. Unless, of course, al-Shaykh Salah and his supporters think that the existence of opposition platforms inside the mosque would be permitted by Islam!

[God forbid!] I ask God Almighty for His forgiveness.

We all believe that religion is a principal cornerstone in society; it is in fact its conscience. But we want religion to rise above the political wrangling and bickering and the ambitions of those clergymen whose cassette tapes have turned them into stars.

So let's go to the mosques and churches to hear religious advice that no two people would disagree about, and let's go to the People's Assembly to argue and disagree without restrictions or restraints.

We all need a role reassignment: let clergymen speak about religion, and let politicians speak about politics.

The danger that we must watch out for is this: clergymen proclaiming religious slogans to terrorize people are dangerous, and politicians proclaiming religious slogans to polarize people are also dangerous.

Terrorism does not come out of a vacuum. It exists if we provide for it a climate in which it can exist; and it grows when we retreat in front of it. The more we fear terrorism, the more it will grow; and the more softly we speak when we oppose it, the more vociferous it becomes. The less courage we manifest in investing in our future, the more clout terrorism gains.

None of us took notice when many people wrote articles after the October 1973 war depicting what happened as though it were a victory that came from the skies and was granted to true believers who exclaimed, "God is great". These articles claimed that Egyptians were assisted by God's soldiers and honored by the victory He granted them. In fact, some of those people even swore that they saw angels fighting with them in the ranks! But the people who promoted such stories forgot that true Islam manifested itself in what the Egyptians did during the years that preceded the war. They learned, underwent training and prepared themselves with the most modern methods and sciences of the age. If the war could

have been won by uttering an exclamation or receiving a blessing, it would have been easy. But this propaganda, which went unchallenged, prevailed and became widespread. Thus, it became a true and dangerous indicator of the retreat of reason in the face of an attempt to outmaneuver the opposition. It also indicated that work and action were taking a back seat to invisible and supernatural considerations. Those who are promoting this propaganda forgot that they were setting up Egyptians for a sad outcome--sad, because what they are telling them is not true. Their message is that people with clean hands are the ones who can solve the problems of Egyptian society and confront the country's cultural dilemma.

Once again no one took notice when supporters of the political religious tendency flexed their muscles. People flinched, and supporters of the political religious tendency were tempted to take further steps and test the possibilities for confrontation.

The phenomenon of people in the streets and even on buses speaking into small microphones and attacking corrupt society without being challenged became widespread.

The small microphones were replaced by large microphones that were placed on top of minarets. And the use of these microphones was no longer limited to the call for prayer at dawn. These microphones were being used to broadcast religious incantations in verse. And people flinched and retreated further.

Knives showed up on university campuses, and they were used to threaten anyone who opposed marches by Islamic groups and the methods these groups used to thwart coeducation and parties and trips for students. No one challenged these people.

Al-Shaykh Salah spoke up in the parliamentary council and confused political issues with religion and religion with politics, but no one challenged him. There were, however, those who tried to outdo him.

The phenomenon of seizing public parks and even other people's property under the pretext of building mosques became widespread, and no one intervened or challenged the perpetrators of such actions because it was a sensitive issue.

And so on: one outmaneuver after another went by unchallenged, and that brought us to where we are today.

And now that we are on the verge of getting a new parliamentary assembly that will determine the future of Egypt in the next five decisive years, I would like to call the attention of the assembly's new members to the fact that they have a major responsibility in the assembly to challenge and oppose those leaders of ideological terrorism.

They have to stand up to them; they should neither be quiet nor try to outdo them.

They have to rearrange those issues that were deliberately scattered and confused.

They have to understand that the assembly is a political platform in which there are no priests and no clergy. They have to understand that the sanctity of religion is not to be attributed to any political statement.

The messengers of political terrorism will cover their political ambitions in religious statements. But assembly members must bring them back into their basic domain of political dialogue. They must realize that all of society will pay the price if some of them neglect their duty or become intimidated.

We all have the fundamental and historical duty of leaving for our children a better climate of thought. This can only come about by challenging ideological terrorism courageously, unequivocally and decisively. Since al-Shaykh Salah and his supporters chose the People's Assembly as their platform, they ought to speak in the one and only language that is spoken there: the language of politics. And that assembly has one and only one nationality: the Egyptian nationality.

Chapter Four: Sudan's Recalcitrance and Ambition

"Here (pointing to Mu'awiyah) is the Prince of the Faithful; if he dies, then this man (pointing to Yazid) will become prince of the faithful. And this (pointing to his sword) will be the fate of anyone who denies that or refuses to accept it." by Yazid ibn al-Muqaffa'

Introduction

I would have liked to address what happened in Sudan under the auspices of applying the canonical law of Islam by appealing to the conscience of our virtuous scholars or our political clergymen. But it was mere coincidence that I came across statements they made which were then published. These statements completely contradict what happened in that cherished part of our country to the south.

What happened in Sudan can only be explained as the recalcitrance of a totalitarian government when it loses its support and when people become tired with what that government has been telling them. The government in Sudan began looking for something new yet old, or old but new. It liked what it found--and we found it too--and what it was looking for in a history of oppression that lasted for 13 centuries after the orthodox caliphs. This history is full of gloomy chapters whose gloom is undiminished by the occasional appearance of one bright chapter.

And finally Imam Numayri--this is his constitutional title now--found what he was looking for. He finally found the justification for doing what he did to the Sudanese people. We will present that to the reader, and what we say will be corroborated by evidence and supported by statements made by neutral agencies.

Ambition is the only explanation for the reaction of our virtuous scholars and the sorrow they felt and expressed when Sudan beat Egypt and applied Islamic law before Egypt. It is ambition that allows people to put a favorable light on a society in which they think they could have influence, a society in which their advice and counsel could be sought. Those people are neither deterred nor

horrified by the death of al-Shaykh al-Tayyib who was publicly executed by Numayri simply because he had a different opinion on how the canonical laws of Islam should be applied. Al-Shaykh al-Tayyib was one of the greatest advocates of the application of Islamic law. Nor are these people deterred or horrified by the sight of four people who were to be executed for the same reason. Imam Numayri had them brought to witness the execution of al-Shaykh al-Tayyib so they could either repent or be executed like their leader. Some of what our virtuous scholars said may be attributed to good intentions or to their love for the faith. I will grant them that and concede that with them. But I would assure them at the same time that we are living in an age in which no one ought to lead or follow anyone because his intentions are good.

The only thing that would be left to say after our discussion of Sudan's recalcitrance--which is the first part of this chapter--and our discussion of Sudan's ambition--which is the second part of the chapter--will be a discussion of what the two have in common. We will discuss that in good time.

1. Sudan's Recalcitrance

First, the Constitution and the Regime

As we previously mentioned in the first chapter of the book, the application of Islamic law could lead to the establishment of the divine right to rule, and that would entail the establishment of a religious state. This did happen in Sudan. The application of the canonical laws of Islam was declared in Sudan in September 1983. Less than 1 year later, on 10 June 1984 to be specific, Imam Numayri sent [the legislative body in Sudan] his proposed amendments to some articles of the constitution. The amendments he proposed were as follows:¹

1. Amendment to Article 80:

The Original Text: A president's term in office is 6 years, and a president may run for re-election.

The Amendment: A president's term begins on the date allegiance to him is declared; it lasts for an unlimited and indefinite period of time. A president serves in that capacity "for life."

Comment: Imam Numayri did not do anything that was different from what actually did happen in the Islamic succession from its early days till it ended. A fixed term of government or a fixed presidential term is unknown in the history of the Islamic caliphate. I do not think that the original text of this article differs with the spirit of Islam, particularly since there are no provisions regulating this matter in the Koran or in the tradition. I also think that the amendment merely affirms the notion of governing by divine right and not by the subjects' wishes. Thus, if a ruler were to overpower or tyrannize his people, his nation would be doomed to a fate from which the only escape would be another act of fate, that is, death or assassination.

1. The Arab Organization for Human Rights, Bulletin No 3, 27 August 1984.

2. Amendment to Article 112

The Original Text: In case the president's position becomes vacant, the vice president shall serve as acting president, and a new president shall be elected in 60 days.

The Amendment: The president may entrust the duties of his office to an official by means of a written, sealed and signed directive. He may dissolve the Advisory Council, and the council has to declare its allegiance to the person who has been entrusted with the duties of the president's office for life.

Comment: 1. The adage that one thing does not do away with another applies to this article. Even if God were to bring the life of a head of state to an end, his influence would linger for quite some time because the article is made up of three consecutive parts.

A. It is the head of state who appoints his successor; he is not chosen by the people.

B. The ruler's wish, as manifested in the appointment of his successor, goes into effect after his death.

C. The ruler's successor continues to rule for the rest of his life.

2. One notices that Imam Numayri did look into the methods by which successors were chosen in the days of the orthodox caliphs. One also notices that he chose the least democratic of these methods. He chose the method by which Abu Bakr promised the entrusted succession to 'Umar. He ignored the method by means of which a select group of people chose a successor from a list of candidates, as was the case with 'Uthman. He set aside the method by which cities chose a successor by declaring their allegiance to him, as was the case with 'Ali. And he ignored the method by means of which the choice of a successor was left up to a group of Muslims, as was the case with Abu Bakr in Saqifah Bani Sa'idah. In other words, the method he chose for determining his successor did not depart from one that was in fact used, but he chose the least democratic method that was used. And let's not say anything about the differences between the individuals.

3. Amendment to Article 115

The Original Text: The president of the republic may be impeached if he is indicted by one third of the People's Assembly and that indictment is supported by two thirds of the assembly.

The Amendment: The president of the republic may not be questioned or impeached.

Comment: If Imam Numayri has based this amendment on something in the (political) history of Islamic government, then that is enough for me; if not, then that is enough for him.

4. Amendment to Article 128

The Original Text: The speaker of the People's Assembly is to be elected by the assembly.

The Amendment: The speaker of the People's Assembly is to be appointed by the president of the republic.

No comment.

5. Amendment to Article 187

The Text of the Article: The judiciary is an independent institution and is accountable to the president in the proper performance of its duties.

The Amendment: The judiciary as well as the president are accountable to God.

Comment: 1. The text [of the amendment] gave Imam Numayri judicial powers that are comparable to his legislative powers.

2. As the text of the amendment makes it clear, accountability has been deferred till the Day of Judgment.

6. Amendment to Article 191

The Text of the Article: The text of the article lists the authorities of the Supreme Court.

The Amendment: All the authorities of the Supreme Court are to be turned over to the president of the republic.

Comment: There is no power and no strength save in God!

7. Amendment to Article 220

The article is to be amended so that anyone recanting his sworn allegiance to the imam is guilty of an act of high treason. ¹

Comment: And here comes the clincher: Despite all the previous amendments for which the history of the civilized world has no constitutional precedent, the imam did realize that objections from some people to his proposals were quite possible. He realized that it was even more likely that protests could come from well-intentioned believers when they discover the discrepancy between what they were wishing for and what had actually happened. So he came out with that provision. The reader is probably aware that the penalty for high treason is execution.

I have no doubt that the previous amendments will irritate and elevate the blood pressure of those who read them, at least slightly. Those amendments will irritate especially those who love freedom or aspire to it. I am reminded, in

1. The original text of this article was not cited in the aforementioned source.

fact, of something that a friend told me. He said, "People who go along with making such proposals deserve to have these laws applied to them." But let me assure those to whom such a thought would occur that the majority of the People's Assembly in Sudan objected to some of these amendments when they were presented to them. So far, we have not had any information about amendments to the amendments, although it is obvious that one of these amendments did survive. That amendment is enough to shake up a whole continent, not a peaceful, placid country like Sudan with its good natured Sudanese people. In fact, it is certain that the last amendment specifically, the one we are commenting on, was not changed at all. Our evidence for this lies in the fact that 80-year old Mahmud Muhammad Taha, the leader of the Republican Brothers Society was executed on 20 January 1985. Mr Mahmud Muhammad Taha was executed because he printed a leaflet objecting to Imam Numayri's method of applying Islamic law. He thought, may God have mercy on him, that he was facing a man like 'Umar ibn al-Khattab who was questioned by a woman in a mosque about the length of his costume, which was longer than that of Muslims. As he was being led to the gallows amidst the cheering crowds--Sudanese newspapers reported that the crowds were cheering, "There is no God but Allah... [You are] a Muslim ruler, Numayri"--Mr Mahmud Muhammad Taha may have realized how large the difference was between the dream and reality. In fact, his execution may have clarified many things, and it may have formulated an eloquent response to the congratulatory message that al-Shaykh Salah Abu Isma'il sent Imam Numayri in Sudan. Al-Shaykh Salah said in that message that "With Numayri, truth has been empowered and Islam has been given a shot in the arm. With Numayri and what he did our hopes and the hopes of Muslims in general have been achieved. With Numayri the application of the laws of Almighty God, something the fraternal country of Sudan in particular has been hoping for, has been achieved."¹

Second, Examples of Cases and Sentences Rendered Pursuant to the Application of Islamic Law in Sudan.²

We will mention here seven specific cases to see how judgment was rendered in them.

The First Case: A few citizens stole some electrical wires. They were taken to Emergency Court No 2 headed by Justice Fu'ad 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Amin. On 20 May 1984 several sentences were handed down to the defendants in the case, the most significant of which was the verdict against the first defendant, Sadiq Ramadan Mahdi. The court ordered that his right hand and left foot be cut off³ and that he pay a fine of 2,000 pounds. If he does not pay the fine, the defendant was to serve a prison sentence of two consecutive years. The third defendant, 'Abdallah al-Nur Adam received the same punishment,⁴ and the sentence was carried out on 21 May 1984. The following may be noticed:

1. "The Parliamentary Record," Sudan's People's Assembly, p 143.
2. This section in its entirety, the provisions as well as the commentary on them, is quoted from Bulletin No 3 of the Arab Organization for Human Rights, 27 August 1984.
3. This is the punishment for those who fight against God and His messenger.
4. AL-SAHAFAH, a Sudanese newspaper, No 7722, 20 May 1984.

A. The president delivered a speech on 9 May in which he referred to that case which was still pending. The president said that those defendants deserved to have their right hands and their left feet cut off. He declared their sentence before the court did, and the court sentence was consistent with his public directives.

B. In Islamic law punishment for stealing public funds does not involve the cutting of any limbs because there is a question of semi-ownership. Public property is owned by the public, and the stolen wires belonged to the state.

C. If cutting a limb were proper punishment in this case, then the criminal's right hand should have been cut off. This crime may not be associated with crimes of fighting against God and His messenger. Punishment for such crimes is determined by certain circumstances and conditions.

D. It is the opinion of most scholars that a legal punishment may not be combined with a fine.

The Second Case:

A citizen, al-Fatih 'Abd-al-Rahman Ahmad embezzled 47,000 pounds from Wadi Sayyidna Secondary School where he was employed as an accountant. He was taken to Emergency Court No 7, which was chaired by Judge al-Mukashifi Taha al-Kabash. The court ruled that the defendant's right hand was to be cut off and that he was to pay a fine of 47,000 pounds. If the fine was not paid, the defendant was to serve a 3-year sentence.¹

The following may be noticed:

A. This is a crime of embezzlement, and embezzlement is not theft. But the confusion that exists in the law allowed the judge to define the crime as a crime of theft, as theft is defined in man-made laws, and he applied to the defendant the Islamic legal punishment for theft.

B. Most scholars of jurisprudence agree that a legal punishment and a guarantee may not be combined. Anyone who undergoes the prescribed legal punishment for theft does not pay a fine for the stolen money. In fact, most scholars of jurisprudence agree that a prescribed legal punishment may not be combined with any other penalty.

The Third Case:

A citizen whose name is Haydar and a female citizen whose name is Makub al-Dunya were arrested and charged with a crime against morals.

While the woman was being questioned, it turned out that she had had relations with a number of men. She gave the investigators a list of her acquaintances'

1. AL-SAHFAH, a Sudanese newspaper, No 7734, 2 June 1984.

names, and the court selected from those names that of 'Abd-al-Rahim 'Isa Taha. Mr Taha was summoned by the court, but he was not put on trial. Instead, the woman's statement was taken against him, and he was sentenced to 25 lashes and a 1-year prison term.¹ That sentence was issued on 8 May 1984.

The following may be noticed:

A. In Islamic provisions a defendant's confession may be used as evidence against him but not as evidence against others.

B. A trial may not be held without evidence; and evidence is either a confession or the statements of competent witnesses.

C. Such trials encourage false and scheming reports, and they open the doors wide for spreading immorality among people and ruining family relations.

The Fourth Case:

Emergency Court No 2 headed by Judge al-Shaykh al-Wali Muhammad sentenced the defendant, Manarah Joseph Santino, an Italian citizen who is the authorized representative of Catholic churches in Sudan, to a 1-month prison term, 25 lashes and a fine of 500 pounds because he had in his possession a bottle of whiskey, a flask of Uzu, 16 bottles of wine and a carton of beer. That sentence was issued on 20 May 1984.²

The following may be noticed:

A. Islamic provisions and Sudan's laws do not prohibit non-Muslims from consuming alcoholic beverages although both forbid drunkenness and buying and selling alcoholic beverages. The defendant was convicted of selling liquor because he claimed that the liquor belonged to the bishop, but he was unable to prove that. However, a defendant is innocent until he is proven guilty, and the defendant is not the one who has to prove that he is innocent. It is the prosecution that has to prove that he was guilty of selling liquor so it can punish him.

B. All the liquor that was found in the man's possession could have been for his personal use. Drinking wine is part of the church's religious ritual, and worshipers drink wine as a symbol of the blood of Christ. Is there anything unusual about the authorized representative of Catholic churches having 16 bottles of wine in his possession?

The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Cases:

Sudanese newspapers publish scores of sentences that have been issued against citizens who were accused of conspiring to commit adultery. A number of these sentences follow:

1. AL-AYYAM, a Sudanese newspaper, No 11261, 31 May 1984.

2. Ibid.

A. Emergency Court No 2 convicted the defendant Samir Amin Mahmud, a Sudanese citizen employed by Chevron, of conspiring to commit adultery. His penalty for that crime was 60 lashes and a 1,000 pound fine; if he does not pay the fine, he is to serve a 1-year prison sentence.¹

B. Emergency Court No 7 convicted 'Ali 'Uthman Hamzah, an employee of Central Investigations; Nawal Mahjub Hamid; 'Uwaydah Mirghani; al-Fatih 'Abd-al-Rahman, a civil servant; Salah Hamid al-Badawi; Kamal Muhammad 'Abbas, a television broadcast station technician; and Yasir al-Nur Bushra of conspiring to commit adultery. The penalty for each one of them was 85 lashes and a fine of 50 pounds. Each was to serve 1 month in prison if the fine was not paid.²

C. Emergency Court No 3 convicted the defendants Ahmad Ibrahim Adam and Fatmah Hasan Salih of the crime of conspiring to commit adultery, and it sentenced them to 40 lashes each and a fine of 150 pounds or 3 months' imprisonment if they do not pay the fine.³

The following may be noticed:

First, the provisions of Islamic jurisprudence do not recognize conspiracy to commit one crime or another as a crime. What constitutes adultery is well-known. The only crime that comes close to adultery would be forbidden private meetings between men and women whose relationship to each other precludes marriage. Such violations and the immoral consequences thereof may be penalized and censured without any reference whatsoever to adultery, since the mere mention of adultery requires the presence of witnesses for the prosecution.

Second, bringing up charges of adultery in Islamic law is a serious matter. Such a charge is not to be made unless adultery was committed. If no adultery was committed, then the person who brings that charge is to be charged with libel and punished accordingly to avoid having vile and abominable deeds becoming commonplace among the people.

By mentioning conspiracy to commit adultery as a crime and convicting people of that crime, Sudanese practices violate the decorum of the canonical law of Islam.⁴

Third, a State of Emergency Is Declared and Emergency Courts Are Set Up To Apply the Canonical Laws of Islam⁵

On 29 April 1984 the president of Sudan proclaimed the State of Emergency Law in accordance with the provisions of Article 111 of the constitution and Article 2 of the 1939 Sudan Defense Act. The proclamation was made by Presidential Decree

1. AL-AYYAM, a Sudanese newspaper, No 11252, 22 May 1984.

2. AL-SAHFAH, No 7713, 9 May 1984.

3. AL-AYYAM, No 11244, 13 May 1984.

4. Here ends the section that has to do with specific cases and is quoted from the aforementioned source.

5. Ibid., no change.

No 258 for 1984, and the state of emergency went into effect on 29 April 1984. Sudan's People's Assembly ratified that decree,¹ and entrusted the president with the task of implementing that law without going back to that body for any period of time he deems necessary.

Courts That Contravene International Legal Systems

Emergency courts did not comply with the general rules for setting up courts. Because they were emergency courts, people who were not involved in the practice of law and law enforcement served on them, and that contravened the legal systems that are recognized by all international laws for the following reasons:

First, the emergency courts that were set up in Sudan are de facto courts that can only be set up in cases of wars or disasters.

Second, these courts are set up directly by the president or by anyone authorized by the president to do so. That person may be a minister, a governor or even a police inspector. This is in accordance with Law No 9 for 1939 and in keeping with the provisions of Article 5 of the 1939 Sudan Defense Act as well as Article Three of the 1984 Emergency Code. In all cases these judicial powers must be exercised by the judiciary.

Third, emergency courts violate the general rule for setting up courts, and that poses a threat to citizens and to justice. The makeup of these courts is unusual for Sudanese society. They are made up of a judge and two men from the armed forces: they can be from the army, the air force, the police or even the system. The sentences they render are based on a majority decision. But since two members of this tribunal lack judicial experience and since most civilian judges are not members of the judiciary, and some of them are retired policemen who were given judicial powers, defendants face the danger of being denied the right to a trial in a civilian court by qualified judges according to the due process of law and the unequivocal rules of evidence.

Fourth, proceedings in these courts are conducted in a punitive manner, and the rules of procedure that are stipulated in criminal law are not observed in these courts with regard to proper speed. These courts most often hear a case in one day and then pronounce sentence and carry it out on the same day as well.

Fifth, defendants in these courts have been denied the right to be defended by an attorney. However, they do have the right to have an attorney appear as a friend. This is a clear violation of the provisions of the provisional constitution, some of whose articles have been suspended. Those articles used to guarantee a few limited public liberties. Furthermore, defendants have been denied the right to have their entire statements entered into the report on court proceedings. The court has the right to record or omit anything it wishes from a defendant's statement. Such curtailments of defendants' rights violate

1. "Al-Shari'ah," Special Appendix to AL-JARIDAH AL-RASMIYAH LI JUMHURIYAH AL-SUDAN AL-DIMUQRATIYAH [The Official Gazette of the Sudan Democratic Republic], No 1350, 7 May 1984.

all recognized systems of law. Furthermore, defendants have been denied the right to appeal since the rulings handed down by these courts are final. Only when they issue a sentence for execution, must that sentence be signed by the president.

Therefore, the sentences issued by these courts have been contradictory and incongruous. A defendant may be tried in Emergency Court No 2, for example, for consuming liquor, conspiring to commit adultery or another crime, and he may be sentenced to a 5-year prison term. Another court may sentence him to 6 months or 6 weeks. Such incongruities are determined by the judge's disposition and may not be appealed. Thus, a defendant was sentenced to have one of his limbs cut off, and the sentence was carried out, but it turned out afterwards that the person was innocent because the real perpetrator of the crime had confessed.

Sixth, although these courts are punitive and precipitous, the legislature has given them the power to issue [harsh] sentences such as cutting off people's hands, cutting their right hands and left feet, crucifixion and execution. These courts may also demand the payment of fines that could amount to millions of pounds.

Seventh, because of the authorities they have been given, these courts deal with all the crimes that restrict liberties, all crimes that affect the state as well as misdemeanors. A supreme court judge may be tried for possession of narcotics, for prostitution or for gambling.

Eighth, it is known legally that there are certain procedures to be followed in proving guilt, and there are legal and criminal rules of procedure that are observed in proving guilt and investigating crimes. Based on the makeup of these courts, however, judges may be guided by the 1983 act on rules of evidence or by the 1983 act on the principles of judicial decisions. In this sense the courts may become convinced that a crime has been committed without having evidence or without following the specific rules that would be known to the judge or defendant.

Ninth, in practice, the sentences handed down by these courts are obviously incompatible with all of Sudan's legacy in jurisprudence, law and the judiciary. These courts have handed down prison sentences of hundreds of years, and they have demanded the payment of fines amounting to millions of pounds.

Fourth, Why Was a State of Emergency Declared?¹

All national and leftist forces and Islamic tendencies concur that a state of emergency was declared in Sudan for the following reasons:

--To deal harshly with the existing and imminent wave of strikes.

--To get rid of the critical contradiction between the constitution and the new laws.

1. Ibid., no change.

--To impose one course of action on government officials because the divisions in their midst had become commonplace and well-known.

--To contain the effects of the deteriorating situation in the south. The government had been defeated in every confrontation that occurred in the south where major development projects, such as oil exploration and the Jonglei Canal project, had been delayed. Communications between the north and the south had even been suspended.

--To impose an emergency punitive system on the courts by setting up these emergency courts that would help terrify and intimidate citizens and serve the regime's security objectives.

But in order for these emergency measures not to be seen for what they really were, the regime portrayed them as earnest efforts to apply the provisions of Islamic law. They appeared to oppose the administrative, financial and moral corruption in which the country has been wallowing. We find evidence for that in the address which the president delivered on the evening of 24 May 1984. We also find evidence of that in the constitutional amendments he sent to the People's Assembly committee on 10 June 1984. The president made two important points in his address.

First, after defining human rights in Islam, the president said, "But there are emergency situations in Islam. When society becomes corrupt and when it deviates sharply from an Islamic course, a state of emergency is announced. We would go into people's homes; we would apprehend people; and we would search and investigate them. We would search and investigate people everywhere."

Second, after mentioning that there were people who opposed him, the president said in the same address, "Those people do not deserve to be brought to trial and tried in accordance with tolerant laws; they must instead be tried in accordance with bad laws." The president was affirming that in the name of Islam and in the name of reform he would overlook all the prescribed legal punishments.¹

Fifth, the Penal Code and the 1983 Act on the Principles of Judicial Decisions²

None of these numerous laws was discussed or considered in Sudan's circles of law and jurisprudence. They were not even discussed or considered in the attorney general's office, nor were they considered by Sudan's law makers in the People's Assembly, for example. These laws were neither discussed nor considered in the media. Instead, they were merely received; a few accepted them, but many criticized them. Sudan's bar association convened a discussion, and in the course of these discussion sessions which lasted 10 days in April 1984, these laws and the state of emergency were discussed. The gaps, discrepancies and omissions were noted, and all were attributed to that offensive haste with which these laws were issued in the name of applying the canonical laws of Islam.

1. Ibid., no change.

2. Ibid., no change.

First, the 1983 Penal Code

The following faults can be found in this law:

A. It marked the inception of the application of Islamic law, and that was a wrong precedent since Islamic law deters crime by a variety of means, the last of which is punishment. In Islamic law faith--and the Koranic verse tells us "Those that accept the true faith and do good works..."--and worship--"Prayer fends away indecency and evil" [al-'Ankabut: 45]--act as deterrents to crime. Social reform is also a deterrent to crime: it fights against need, makes marriage easier, and does away with the social causes of crime. In Islamic law punishment is one of the other means that are available to fight crime. From an Islamic point of view it must not appear that legal punishment is the only means in Islam for fighting crime.

Punishment in Islam is also utilized to protect an Islamic regime. However, enforcing Islamic penalties without taking the first steps to establish an Islamic system means that Islamic penalties are being used to protect a non-Islamic regime, and that violates the intent of Islamic law.¹

B. Islamic law stipulates lashes as a penalty in three instances: adultery, libel and consuming liquor. In a moral sense this is a serious penalty because it involves the defendant's humiliation. These legal punishments are binding because of the suspicions that accompany them. Therefore, lashing has been a deterrent against crime. The penal code, however, applies lashing to all crimes and creates thereby the impression that lashing is the best punitive measure in Islamic law. This impression is quite mistaken because, except in those cases where legal punishments are prescribed, Islam allows censure as a form of punishment, and that makes it possible to enforce the kind of punishment that is suitable to the crime and appropriate to changing social conditions. And that includes nominal punishments such as rebukes or reprimands.

The frequent application of lashing to punish people who have been convicted of crimes has also been linked with the frequent sentences that have been handed down to cut off people's hands and cut off their right hands and left feet, even though the underlying wisdom of these prescribed legal punishments is that they are rarely enforced. It is that which makes them deter crimes; they were not meant to become commonplace, daily punishments.

The number of hands cut off in Sudan in half a year has exceeded the number of hands that were cut off during the 25 years of King 'Abd-al-'Aziz Aal Sa'ud's reign. The wisdom and significance behind the idea of applying the canonical law of Islam have been taken away by this law which generated a multitude of amputated and bloodied hands and feet and battered bodies.²

3. The 1983 Penal Code comprises the prescribed legal punishments for a few [crimes] that are difficult to establish. These punishments are stipulated in

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

the code, but no attempt is made to codify the canonical laws of Islam. Except for those legal punishments, the old penal code was first written by Lord Macauley in 1860 for India and applied by the British in Sudan after the Mahdi's movement. The code deals with the entire spectrum of criminal justice, and so do the state's man-made oppressive security laws. With such characteristics, this penal code is not a suitable model for the modern application of Islamic criminal provisions.¹

In so far as it is an attempt to enforce Islamic penalties in the modern age, this law is a distortion of Islamic law that is not worth the paper it is printed on. In fact, it has a negative effect: it turns people away from Islamic law.²

Second, the 1983 Act on the Principles of Judicial Decisions³

This is the law that guides judges when they interpret the provisions of a law in light of the precepts of Islam's canonical laws. In case there is no [explicit] text, the provisions of Islamic law as mentioned in the Koran and the tradition are to be applied. If there is no text in the Koran or the tradition, a judge is to exercise his independent judgment, employing consensus and analogy first. A judge is to take into account what is beneficial and that which will ward off the causes of corruption, without violating Islamic law. He is to be accompanied by innocence when he considers cases; he is to be permissive in his actions; and he is to make matters easy when he assigns tasks to people. A judge is to be guided by legal and judicial precedents that do not violate Islamic law, and he is to take into account customs and ideas in transactions that do not violate Islamic law. He is to bear in mind the significance of justice and proper sentiments. This is one of the most dangerous laws because it allows judges to exercise their independent judgments and legislate laws even though their education may not qualify them for making such judgments, and their offices do not allow them to become legislators. If this situation continues, court sentences in Sudan will become significantly lopsided just as court sentences were during the administration of the Abbasids before Abu Yusuf came to power. This matter cannot be dealt with by having judges rely on bulletins issued by the chief justice to help them understand the provisions of the law because this would mean that the chief justice will become the only one who can express an independent Islamic opinion and the country's only legislator.

Whether judges retain the exclusive right to exercise their independent judgment on legal questions or acquire that from the bulletins they receive from the chief justice, the act on the principles of judicial decisions constitutes a threat to the provisions of Islamic law and to proper constitutional practices as well.⁴

1. All observations and comments can be found in the previous reference. The author did not add or change anything.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Sixth and Last: Disbanding Professional Associations and Trade Unions in Sudan

The Bar Association in Cairo issued the following statement:

The Bar Association is watching with considerable concern the recent deterioration of human rights conditions in the fraternal country of Sudan. This deterioration is the result of a series of successive emergency laws and measures.

On 29 April 1984 Presidential Decree No 258 for 1984 imposed a state of emergency on the country. The constitution was suspended when the state of emergency was declared.

Emergency courts were set up in the country on 1 May 1984. The aim of these courts is to put an end to the ordinary civilian court system and to replace those civilian courts by de facto emergency courts. Most of the people who serve on these courts are military men with no judicial background or experience.

These courts have been spreading terror by staging superficial and immediate trials that thwart all the rules and guarantees afforded by Sudan's constitution, by the criminal procedures law and by international conventions and practices. In accordance with the orders that established these courts Sudanese citizens who are tried by these courts are denied their sacred rights to defend themselves and to appeal the verdicts handed down by these courts.

Article 241 G of the 1977 Professional Associations Act has been amended recently. That amendment denies individuals who practice 13 professions their legitimate right to form their professional associations. Chief among those professions are lawyers, physicians, veterinarians, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, agricultural specialists and others. There are indications that this serious step is paving the way for an attack against all existing professional associations and labor unions and that the Bar Association is at the head of the list. This will be done to prohibit all the activities of professional associations and trade unions in Sudan.

In addition to violating the provisions of Sudan's constitution, all these arbitrary measures imply a blatant violation of the International Declaration of Human Rights and of all international covenants that have to do with man's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. These covenants guarantee citizens the right to be judged by their peers; they guarantee them a fair trial in front of an independent and impartial court that will ensure for them all the guarantees for a proper defense. These covenants also decree the people's right to form, join and become active in their professional associations. The Bar Association in Egypt, acting on the basis of its national responsibility, denounces and condemns the violations against the rights and liberties of Sudanese citizens. The Bar Association in Egypt affirms its total solidarity with Sudanese professionals in particular and with the fraternal people of Sudan in general. The Bar Association in Egypt will work with the people of Sudan to affirm, protect and strengthen human rights. The Bar Association calls upon all professional associations and labor unions in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab homeland to speak up and to make themselves heard in defense of democracy and the freedom of professional associations in Sudan. It

is calling for an end to the extraordinary emergency conditions; it is asking that all anti-democratic laws be repealed; that people be given the freedom to work in their professional associations and that all Sudanese political prisoners be released.

The secretary general of the Bar Association
Muhammad Fahim Amin, attorney

President of the Bar Association
Ahmad al-Khawajah, attorney

2. Sudan's Ambition

First, Examples of Expressions of Support from Muslim Intellectuals in Egypt on the First Anniversary of the Application of Islamic Law in Sudan¹

"The application of Islamic law in Sudan was a glorious inspiration from God Almighty to officials in Sudan. By pursuing that new course Sudanese officials have shown the respect they have for their beliefs, rites and laws. They have also linked their present with their past, extending their glorious heritage and standing tall and firm to oppose the cultural invasion and foil the malicious colonialist attempts that wanted to put an end to this Islamic nation's future prospects on this good land. I believe that Sudan cannot be happier than it is with this fine and virtuous stage [in its history]. Sudan's application of Islamic law has made it possible for the country to purge itself from contamination by man-made laws."² This was written by al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali.

"The campaign that President Numayri is currently being subjected to because of the application of Islamic law is similar to that which the lord and master of all prophets and messengers was subjected to in the past. All advocates of reform have been subjected to such campaigns. But we expect life to go on despite the wailing of wolves. Are clouds hurt in any way by the barking of dogs?"³ This was written by al-shaykh 'Abd-al-Hamid Kishk.

"All of us in Egypt, the people and the government, are pleased and delighted that Islamic law has been applied in Sudan. We salute the faithful leader of that fraternal country, President Ja'far Muhammad Numayri. The application of religious provisions in Egypt, a Muslim country and the home of the noble al-Azhar, would be the best way by means of which Egypt's progress and prosperity can be achieved and its glory restored. The application of Islamic law in the country will enable Egypt to hold up its head when it calls for the application of Islamic law throughout the Islamic world."⁴ This was written by al-Shaykh 'Abd-al-Latif Hamzah, Egypt's mufti.

1. "Kitab al-Barlaman: 'Am 'ala Tatbiq al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah fi al-Sudan" [The Parliament Book: 1 Year under Islamic Law in Sudan], Sudan's People's Assembly, publications of al-Ta'awun [Cooperation] Publishing Organization.

2. Ibid., p 71.

3. Ibid., p 94.

4. Ibid., pp 102-103.

"The Nile Valley Parliament has to discuss methods by which Islamic law can be standardized and applied in both Egypt and Sudan. The Nile Valley Parliament has been called upon to do this ever since it was established. I will take advantage of this opportunity and tell the speaker of Egypt's parliament, the People's Assembly, that the fraternal country of Sudan has applied Islamic law before us in Egypt, in the country that houses the noble al-Azhar from which Islam radiates all over the world. Sudan did not wait: it did not form committees, hold meetings, or engage in other activities before putting the laws of Islam into effect." ¹ This was written by al-Shakh 'Abd-al-Latif Mushtuhuri.

"This clever step will not go unheeded or unnoticed by those who do not wish to see the radiant light of Islam shine over Muslim lands. They will launch a violent and determined attack on this step, and they will hire Muslim and non-Muslim writers who sold their souls for the gains of this world which are ephemeral and temporary. Those people who have experience with such situations will come out talking about reactionaries and backwardness. They will say that it is Islam that brought Muslims to that destiny. A judicious leader, therefore, must be wary of such people. He is to curb their defiance, and he is not to allow them to carry on such discussions under the pretext of freedom of speech. Freedom lies in matters that people can forge for themselves; what God has decreed, however, is not debatable." ² This was written by Mr 'Umar al-Talmasani.

"Islamic thought does not recognize those artificial borders that colonialism created around a country. In the integrated world [of Islam], we had hoped and expected the integration of spiritual and material matters to be complete. We had hoped that Egypt, the home of al-Azhar, would have been the foremost country to achieve this great success in the spiritual realm. But it was God's wish that you in Sudan succeed and that you be first in applying Islamic law in your country. Congratulations, Mr President. The first honor that Sudan gained was that its dutiful citizen, Mr 'Izz-al-Din al-Sayyid, the speaker of Sudan's People's Assembly, won world-wide confidence and became the president of the International Parliamentary Association. That is an indication of the worldwide appreciation that is felt for the steps Sudan has taken under your leadership to put the canonical law of Islam into effect." ³ This was written by al-Shaykh Salah Abu Isma'il

Second, Examples of Expressions of Support Appearing in Religious Newspapers in Egypt for the Application of Islamic Law in Sudan

1. AL-NUR Newspaper⁴

The Headline: Emergency Court in Sudan Hands down First Sentences since Application of Islamic Law: Execution for Adulterous Man; Lashes for Adulterous Woman

Sudanese Witness Prescribed Legal Punishments Carried Out, Cheer To Show Support for Application of Islamic Law

1. Ibid., p 120.

2. Ibid., p 138.

3. Ibid., p 147.

4. No 118.

Muhammad 'Amir wrote the details of the news.

--The Islamic world in its entirety is viewing with pleasure the ongoing earnest application of Islamic law in Sudan, despite all the conspiracies that are being planned to stop the application of Islamic law in Sudan and scare people in other Islamic countries who are thinking of applying the laws of God in their countries.

--On the other hand the Emergency Court has decided to ban and prohibit in Sudan all forms of western dance as well as dancing for Sudanese men and women. The court also ruled that the owner and manager of a nightclub was to be punished by 25 lashes because the program that is presented at the nightclub does not conform to Islamic precepts and causes men and women to socialize in what is considered a shameless manner.

It is worth noting that Imam Numayri issued orders for the destruction of large quantities of non-Islamic beverages worth 14 million pounds. These beverages, which had been imported before the application of Islamic law and were being stored in the port of Port Sudan, belong to foreign embassies and a few stores and companies.

AL-NUR prays for Sudan's success and good fortune, and it calls upon all the countries of the Islamic world to follow the course of an Islamic government.

2. AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI¹

The Headline: AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI Witnesses First Anniversary of Application of Islamic Law in Sudan; More than 1 Million Sudanese Join March Supporting Decisions Based on the Koran

Secondary Titles:

Crime Rate Declines

Proper Treatment for Non-Muslims

Christians Support Application of Islamic Law

Followers of Other Religions Respected

How Prescribed Legal Punishments Are To Be Applied

Four Stages to Islamic Government

No Turning Back from Application of Islamic Law

Unprecedented Popular March

Crowds as Large as Those on Mount 'Arafat

1. No 141.

Reforming the Judicial System

Changing the Entire Legal System

The Legislative Revolution

Courts To Vouch for Attorneys

Prisons Turned into Educational Institutions

And in the same issue of the newspaper [the following appeared]: "The president of Sudan is trying to create a virtuous individual and a virtuous society. That would be the real foundation and the cornerstone in the experiment of applying the canonical laws of Islam." This was written by Dr Yusuf al-Qardawi.

"The first anniversary of the application of Islamic law in the fraternal country of Sudan is a memorable occasion. The application of Islamic law in Sudan is considered a unique example that should be followed by Islamic countries because it would save people from the sense of loss and misery from which they suffer." This statement was made by Muhammad 'Ali Clay.

3. The Similarities between Sudan's Recalcitrance and Ambition

Imam Numayri announced there was a 40 percent decline in thefts in Sudan after enforcement of the punishment of cutting off a thief's hand began. I do not think that what I mentioned to the reader in our discussion about Sudan's recalcitrance could persuade a single Sudanese citizen that the decline in theft had anything to do with Islamic law or religion. Rather, this is something that has to do with a regime that is playing its last hand in the game and proclaiming slogans that it is the first one to violate. It is consequently inconceivable for the Sudanese people to have become more faithful and devout in 1 year. Nor is it conceivable for Sudanese citizens to have come closer to God or to have grown more conscientious and more devout because the regime in Sudan has settled its accounts with the opposition or because it failed to resolve the question of the south--that failure is what brought the north and south in Sudan to the brink of separation. Sudanese citizens could not have become better Muslims in 1 year because the regime wishes to prolong its life indefinitely. There is only one possibility left: if we believe the imam's statistics that the rate of theft has declined. We have to attribute the decline in thefts to the harshness and cruelty of the punishment.

That explanation makes it easier for us to imagine an even greater decline in the rate of theft if a harsher punishment were to replace that of cutting off the thief's hand. The reader may think that I am being facetious or that I am injecting humor into serious issues. God forbid that I should do that in such a discussion! What I am saying, however, appears to be lighthearted but is in fact distressing. Since when did Islam begin and end with punishment? Since when did Islam begin by letting people's blood flow in public squares or by filling these squares with amputated human hands and feet? Shouldn't Islam begin with the Muslim himself? I do in fact recall a discussion that took place in the course of calling for the immediate application of Islamic law. One of our important scholars was always comparing the crime rate in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia with the crime rate in advanced western countries. Although the overall crime statistics in western countries may include some crimes that are not included in Saudi Arabia's crime statistics, such as traffic violations, for example, what caught my attention when he made that point was the obvious emphasis he always placed on the declining rates of theft in Saudi Arabia in particular. He said that people in Saudi Arabia would go to pray and leave their stores open. He would thus leave his audience deliciously intoxicated by visions of such an ideal society. And no one would argue with him or mention the high standard of living in Saudi Arabia. Nor would anyone ask him how safe Saudi Arabia was for young children, girls as well as boys, but particularly boys. No one would ask him if a parent dared to let his 10-year old son go to a nearby store unaccompanied.

Of course the great scholar would offer us no explanations for the instructions given to newcomers to Saudi Arabia by people who have been living in that country for some time. These instructions may be summarized in a set of restrictions: if you and your wife take a cab, don't let her get in or out of that cab first. If you do that, you would be exposing your wife to the danger of being kidnapped; if she is kidnapped, it is certain that she will be killed because the kidnappers would want to wipe out all traces of the crime they committed, for which the punishment is well-known. The great scholar also did not take the trouble to explain to us conditions in Saudi Arabia's prisons, and these are prisons that remind one of pre-medieval times. Nor does he get involved in discussions on political liberties in that fraternal country. But I do not wish to go on in this vein because that would be distressing. I will merely affirm and tell our illustrious scholar that the security we are enjoying in Egypt, the country of what they call man-made laws, is much greater. I will tell him that he who gives us an example of something, must give us the whole story. He must tell us the whole truth, not just one part of it.

Let me go back to our discussion on Sudan so I can pose a few questions to the reader who can then verify the validity of the conclusions that have already been presented in the articles that comprised the first chapter of the book.

Question No 1: Is there a relationship between the rosy picture that is painted by our writers about Sudan's experience and what is happening there?

Question No 2: Has the application of Islamic law led to the establishment of a religious state or not?

Question No 3: Does the constitution which was presented to Sudan's People's Assembly reflect a method of government by divine right or not?

Question No 4: Do you or do you not consider the civil war that is threatening to separate south Sudan from the rest of the country on a sectarian basis to be a direct result of all the foregoing?

And then there is one last and final question: Is this what you would like to see happen in Egypt?

One comment has to be made: I noticed that in the same aforementioned human rights bulletin there was news about the intent to amend the laws so as to make

it possible for defendants to file appeals "three days" after they are sentenced. That news item reported that attorneys would be allowed to represent their clients. The new decisions also stipulate that executions and hand amputations be carried out at least "three days" after the sentence is handed down. And yet, very little has changed despite these decisions. There is also a fact that supersedes all that: nations are not laboratory animals for such practices. Such practices, if they did take place, prove definitely how dangerous the call for the immediate and undelayed application of the provisions of Islamic law would be to the Egyptian people and even to Islam itself. Read that chapter from the beginning so you can assure yourself of that.

Chapter Five: Why Now?

"O come, ye gloomy, foggy clouds of doom!"

Why now? This is the question that is being asked on the political scene about the growing tide of religious politics in the seventies and eighties. The growth of this tide has been such that it is impossible for us to ignore its impact and influence on the region's present and perhaps even its future. I will admit in advance that my attempt to answer that question may fall short and may be hasty. I will also admit that I may sometimes confuse cause with possibility. I also admit that my attempt to answer that question focuses on the reality of Egyptian politics, even though that does not significantly diminish the importance of the attempt. I do this because in my judgment Egypt is the cradle of civilization. It is [meant to become] a laboratory experiment; and it has been targeted for the change that will be set off to influence the entire region.

It is a common error to talk about the Islamic political tendency as though it were one political tendency. Such an approach is erroneous because it confuses three different and distinct political tendencies. These are the traditional Islamic tendency, the revolutionary Islamic tendency and the wealthy Islamic tendency.

The Traditional Islamic Tendency

This tendency manifests itself in the Muslim Brothers' movement. Generally speaking, it is a moderate tendency whose history tells us that few of its factions adopted extremism and established secret armed organizations to assassinate their opposition when the climate was democratic, or to overthrow the government when the regime was totalitarian. There is no doubt that of all Islamic leaders Muslim Brothers' leaders are the most politically active or, to be more precise, the ones whose involvement in political activity is the greatest. They are always trying to maintain a delicate balance between their claim to be a society that is not seeking power and their involvement in political activity whose only aim is power. The question whether this group of people is a society or a political party may be the foremost issue on its leaders' minds. It is also the foremost issue on the minds of those who are involved in political activity. The political changes that have been taking place from the early fifties, or to be more specific when Hasan al-Banna, the group's founder died, until representatives of the Muslim Brothers won seats in parliament for the first time as members of the alliance they formed with the Wafd in the 1984 elections, may have had a positive effect on the gradual shift

among Muslim Brothers away from the idea of being a society to that of being a political party. But we must emphasize that Hasan al-Banna did make an effort to reject the notion that the Muslim Brothers be considered a political party because he wanted to avoid the group's involvement in political conflict while it was still in the stages of being developed. More importantly, Hasan al-Banna was apprehensive about the fact that being a political party would require the development of a political agenda, and the dangers of that were not unknown to him. Such a political agenda could generate differences, discord and maybe even division over minor issues.

The Revolutionary Islamic Tendency

This is a tendency that emerged in the late sixties and broke up into numerous branch organizations the strongest of which at the present time is al-Jihad organization. All these branches share the common belief that contemporary society is pagan and ignorant. They reject all available methods of political activity; they reject the constitution as a man-made system; and they reject democracy as a secular alternative whose aim is to mislead and deceive people. This tendency believes that violence is the only method of action. Its proponents think that setting forth any political question or discussing it is nothing but a biased attempt to squander and waste the tendency's efforts and turn its proponents away from their sole objective of seizing power, which is the only method for bringing about change.

The Wealthy Islamic Tendency

This tendency is led by people who have enormous fortunes all of which were (coincidentally) made in Saudi Arabia. They are joined by a group of people who made their fortunes in Egypt's climate of economic liberalization with direct assistance from those who (coincidentally) were the first to emigrate to Saudi Arabia. Leaders of this tendency believe it is possible to establish an Islamic government modeled after that which exists in Saudi Arabia. Society would be divided into three groups. Rulers would make up the first group; the wealthy would make up the second group; and the third group would be made up of the rest of the people. Fortunes could grow as a result of the close relationship that could develop between the first two groups. Fortunes could grow by affirming the Islamic method of free trade, rejecting the practice of price fixing, limiting taxes to the alms tax, and resisting any left-wing or even moderate right-wing tendencies on the grounds that they subscribe to destructive principles. At the same time, the relationship between the first two groups could be strengthened by keeping people occupied with religious and devotional issues and with questions about fighting corruption, forbidding evil practices, heeding the lessons that would be learned by witnessing the execution of prescribed legal punishments, receiving limited grants on religious occasions, and concentrating on the blessings that await poor people in the afterlife. That would guarantee safety for the wealthy against the dangers of the lower classes' rebellion. In other words, that tendency sees an Islamic state as nothing more than an ideal framework for amassing more wealth. This tendency believes that the closed domestic political climate proposed by a religious state could constitute an ideal line of defense against the left, against instability and even against the moderate right.

Methods of Action

We may be able to infer the methods of action employed by the three tendencies from the foregoing description. The first tendency, the traditional one, which is still relatively the weakest of the three, believes in exercising its political activity in the existing climate. At the present time its leaders are announcing their intention to establish a political party. Proponents of this tendency think that in the current political climate of the step-by-step democracy it would be possible for them to win a majority that would enable them to rule or at least take part in government. At the very least they could exercise strong influence on government. And proponents of this tendency think they can accomplish that in the absence of ideological confrontations which are due to fear, complex issues to consider, feelings of apprehension about the future and about common interests that media leaders take into account. Those people believe that assuming power is their only way for setting forth their approach, which is manifested in their view that they constitute the party of God and those who reject their approach make up the devil's party. Ultimately, however, it may be said out of fairness to this tendency, that of the three, it is the one most capable of taking political action and most likely to interact favorably with it. If proponents of that tendency are allowed to establish their political party, democracy would have gained. However, that should be done in a climate that is completely democratic, a climate where there is total freedom to establish parties, publish newspapers and express opinions.

The second tendency, the revolutionary tendency, is the most dangerous of the three, even though it is not the most influential. It has several clear and distinguishing characteristics. First, supporters of that tendency are found almost exclusively among young people between the ages of 15 and 35. It is rare to find people over 35 who subscribe to that tendency. Second, most proponents of this tendency are students in secondary schools and universities. There are numerous reasons for that including numerous opportunities to assemble and an almost total lack of responsibility. It is also possible to take advantage of the social frustration felt by those people as a result of the conflict between the ambitions of that critical age and its material and moral aspirations and what is almost a deterministic social, class and political reality. The third and most important characteristic of this tendency is the lack of substance in its organizational doctrine. The substance in that tendency's doctrine is restricted to two main points: rejection as a premise, and power as an objective. Any other questions that could become the subject of debate or controversy are ruled out. This is an approach that may be criticized from the outside, but it is one that increases the solidarity of supporters. As long as everything is rejected, talking about particulars would be useless. As long as change is called for, the only useful method to bring about change is to seize power, and that is the only objective. And as long as seizing power is the objective, then violence is the only method and armed organization is the only means by which the objective can be achieved.

The third tendency, the wealthy tendency, is in my judgment the strongest of the three because it is not visible. If we ignore that tendency when we analyze the reality of the Islamic political movement in Egypt, something will be missing. The fact is that this tendency employs a more contemporary logic in its actions, one that is also more capable of achieving its objectives. By the nature of its

makeup, the wealthy tendency is more sympathetic with the traditional tendency even though it is not affiliated with it for several reasons. The most important of these reasons are: the wealthy tendency moves in a broader sphere; it has ties with more specific interests; it is more attached to the framework of the question than it is to its substance; and it is more attached to its own interests than it is to the doctrine. Because of its financial position, that tendency does not participate directly in political life. In the final analysis, however, it views the traditional tendency as merely a catalyst in a chemical reaction that does not emerge on the other side of the chemical equation. On the other hand, the wealthy tendency harbors deep feelings of hostility towards the revolutionary tendency. And that reflects the ongoing conflict in the area between two Islamic tendencies that are in a position to govern: one of them is wealthy and the other radical.

This tendency has taken advantage of the economic liberalization climate in Egypt, and it has been able to control a group of financial institutions, namely, a few Islamic banks and a few investment companies. That tendency was able to utilize these institutions and the fortunes of its members to establish and finance a few projects, such as printing presses. Such projects would be vitally important to any ideological tendency. This wealthy tendency established, for example, publishing firms that pay writers fantastic fees for their works so as to link their ideological tendencies with the tendency. In fact, these publishing firms enter into agreements with the writers and commission them to write on subjects of a religious nature to ensure that the school of thought to which they are inclined in the short term is "Islamic". This wealthy tendency also contributes to the establishment of newspapers and magazines both inside Egypt and abroad, and it maintains ties with them. It also has contractual agreements with major figures in the press and with writers to write for these publications. Such agreements tie the writers' economic interests with the founders' clear and well-known tendencies.

Supporters of that tendency have not been hesitant about taking action in other influential areas. For example, they lent support to Islamic tendency candidates in the general elections so that their relationship would appear to be one that is internal and fraternal. They were also very skillful and astute in the methods they used to advertise the projects to which they are contributing. They affirmed their political ideas and at the same time raised doubts about prevailing conditions. [They affirmed] that the profits earned by Islamic banks were permissible and good and that their activities were neither usurious nor suspect. [They affirmed] that doing business with the state's financial institutions, such as public sector banks, insurance companies and other firms, tainted money, undermined security and forced the public to demand opportunities for contributing to Islamic projects so they can launder their funds.¹ It would of course be logical to assume that employees of these projects would have

1. An example of such advertisements: "After a 'fit person' works in what usurious investments produce; after the so-called subsidized interest acquired other new meanings and became more usurious than others; after usury took away the notion of security from the food security policy; and after the public demanded that opportunities for participation remain available so they can launder their money and remove from it the traces of usury." AL-AKHBAR, 24 Aug 84; AL-AKHBAR, 26 Aug 84.

to be Muslim. It would also be logical to go beyond that and require the Muslim employees to be devout. Among female employees it would be logical to require proper moral conduct and to go beyond that and require them to observe the rules of Islamic dress. I will refrain from going into many particulars about the methods of this influential and recently formed tendency, but I will affirm that that tendency is the closest thing we have to a lobbying group. It is the only existing and influential civilian group in Egyptian society. It is a group whose members use their wealth well and direct their resources toward a specific target intelligently. They do this as they wait for a suitable political and international climate.

The Contradiction

It is extraordinary that a review of the three foregoing tendencies brings us to a specific conclusion. "Collectively," these tendencies have three basic strengths: an acceptable idea, the power of violence and the authority of money. Their basic weakness, however, is this: they lack that collective quality that I stressed.

Because of its propensity to proclaim general slogans that are difficult to argue or criticize and easy to top, such as, "The Koran is our constitution"; "God's messenger is our leader"; and "Dying for the cause of God is our sweetest hope", the traditional tendency is the one that the majority find most acceptable. This traditional tendency is the one that is most acceptable to the majority because it sets forth a few statements that thinkers are not allowed to analyze or refute, such as "Islam is the religion of the Koran and the sword; it is a religion and a state." The traditional tendency avoids addressing any details about a political program. Thus, in the absence of any competing tendencies, such as the Nasirist tendency, which is missing because Egypt's democracy is flawed, and the secular tendency, which is missing too because democratic political parties have retreated from the scene, the traditional Islamic tendency becomes the one ideological tendency that the majority finds most acceptable.

The revolutionary tendency, however, was able to achieve its interim objective of brandishing the sword of terrorism in the ruler's or thinker's face and affirming that it had the strongest capabilities for using civilian organizations to bring about violent change. The violence that this tendency is setting forth is difficult to resist because, on the one hand, predicting the violent action would be difficult and because the would-be perpetrators are scattered in small and widespread pockets. Second, one individual by himself may perpetrate this violence. Third, this kind of violence confuses terrorism with doctrine, and that means assassinating someone becomes an action taken for the cause of God; dying in action becomes martyrdom; and imprisonment becomes the route to a palace in paradise.

As far as the third tendency is concerned, evidence of its power lies in the fact that its protector and the guardian of its proponents in the previous administration was viewed inside the country and abroad as the key figure for the future of investment and investors in Egypt.

I may be able to explain to the reader this obvious contradiction between the profound sense of power that the religious political tendency has and its obvious failure to achieve its ultimate objective. The explanation for this contradiction lies in the fact that all the ingredients for power are available--and that accounts for the sense of power they have. However, the tendencies are not united--and that keeps them from achieving their objective. It is the bright and radiant mercy that God bestows on His faithful worshipers that comes between those ingredients of power that the tendencies have and the disunity that exists in their midsts.

The Question Is Still Being Asked

After the foregoing preliminaries, let me go back and ask that question with which we began this chapter. That question may be asked in two parts. The first part is why? In other words, what are the reasons for this powerful growth in the Islamic political movement? The second part of the question is this: why now? In other words, this is a question about the reasons that led to this growth in the seventies and early eighties. It is my judgment that the implications of the growth of this movement and the time in which that growth is taking place may be considered together when the reasons for the movement's growth are set in the proper time framework.

An Explanatory Note

The reasons for the growing power of the Islamic political movement with its different factions may be limited to 10. Altogether, they constitute what may be called an explanatory note for the emergence of the religious tendency as an influential political power in the seventies and early eighties. These reasons are:

1. The defeat and the search for roots
2. The missing national cause
3. The economic crisis
4. Al-Sadat's suicide
5. Democratic permissiveness
6. The superpower and the error of analogy
7. The conflict between wealthy and radical tendencies
8. Coalition parties
9. Errors in Handling the Situation
10. Forbidden topics of discussion

1. The Defeat and the Search for Roots

The 1967 defeat forced the Egyptians, or rather all the Arabs, to take a hard look at themselves. The magnitude of the defeat made it necessary that this self-examination include setting forth the choices once again. It was believed that these choices, chief among which was that between a past system of Islamic government and the European system of government, had been settled at the end of the 19th century when the latter method of government was eventually adopted after the French campaign [in Egypt]. The first step in making that choice was taken when Egyptians, led by 'Umar Makram, chose Muhammad 'Ali to be their ruler. The last manifestation of that choice was the close relationship that existed between western civilization and Isma'il's administration. It was natural that two ideological tendencies would emerge after the defeat. The first tendency called for a confrontation with the Israeli enemy by learning more about him and by making further adjustments to the culture of the age. This means not only accepting the outside manifestations of that culture, but also adopting its essential nature of respecting the human mind, appreciating human labor and elevating the value of human beings. The second tendency, however, saw the defeat not so much as a defeat for Egyptians or for Egyptian leaders but rather more as a defeat for the western choice that the Egyptians made. What helped strengthen the argument set forth by supporters of this tendency is the fact that Israel itself is basically a religious state or at least a state that views religion and nationalism as two sides of the same coin. That fact did not prevent Israel from defeating all these countries in this short period of time. Israel put these countries to shame, and it humiliated them. Supporters of this tendency think that Israel has to be confronted with the same weapon. Muslims must unite against the Jewish invasion, particularly since the history of the Islamic state in the days of the prophet is full of confrontations with the Jews. The history of the Islamic state is full of the Muslim's victories against the Jews. Supporters of this tendency affirm that the only explanation for the magnitude of the defeat lies in a statement which says that God abandoned us when we abandoned Him. It is therefore essential that Muslims all over the world come together to fight against the enemies of religion and liberate Jerusalem, the second holiest city in Islam, the city where the prophet landed after his nocturnal journey to the seven heavens.

The political stage was thus set for the first appearance of the revolutionary Islamic tendency, and the traditional Islamic tendency went back to its positions. It is to be noted that the reemergence of the Islamic political movement on the political scene occurred in all Arab countries without exception. This affirms the fact that the reaction to the defeat was the same. All of this happened in the few years following the defeat. Thus, the connection between the defeat and the reemergence of that movement as a direct and spontaneous reaction to the defeat is confirmed. It is also certain that leaders of that tendency realized that for Israel Judaism had a national as well as a religious role. It is that which compelled them to proclaim slogans affirming Islamic nationalism: slogans such as "A Muslim's homeland is where he lives"; "We are the soldiers of God: we do not fight for a country or for land"; and "Come back, O nation of Islam."

2. The Absence of a National Cause

This reason for the growth of the Islamic political movement is one that is very important. Its importance is derived, on the one hand, from the fact that it is one of the most important reasons for the growth of the Islamic political movement. A national cause is also important because dealing with it is one of the possible alternative solutions for getting out of the crisis created by growing movements to bring back the ways of our ancestors. It has been noticed that there is a reverse correlation between a growing sense of regional patriotism and the growth of Islamic political movements. It has also been noticed that a sense of regional patriotism grows to its maximum, with Islamic political tendencies regressing considerably, to oppose a country's occupation or a foreign enemy who is posing a direct threat to regional borders. This may be one of the reasons why the religious political movement declined during the 1919 Revolution. It began to emerge for the first time in an organized fashion the first time the national cause languished on the scene as a result of the independence that was gained in the 1936 Treaty. It is certain that the decline of the Islamic political movement between 1954 and 1967 was caused by, among other things, the emergence of Arab nationalism as an alternative to patriotism and the association between it and the direct threat that loomed on the eastern borders with Israel, as well as the indirect threat that came from the forces of world imperialism. The magnitude of the defeat was much greater than anything that could have been imagined about possibilities for a confrontation with traditional methods that would not effect fundamental change in the way of life and government. It is that which helped the religious political movement take action and become involved despite the fact that the national cause created by the occupation had had a negative effect on it. That influence wore away gradually after 1973.

The absence of a national cause to bring all Egyptians together, unite their efforts and allow them to overlook ideas about religious differences or about separating people according to their religion is the most serious problem on politicians' minds at the present time. It was not easy for Egyptian society to accept the economic cause as an alternative to the national cause, even though it is a daily, pressing issue affecting people's lives. It is the Egyptian people's opinion that the economic question is basically a question for the professionals. Many people, including me, may have explained the Egyptian people's aversion to political activity by attributing it primarily to the absence of a clear national cause. Anyone who is involved in political life today has to envy Egypt's political leaders during the occupation which in and of itself mobilized Egyptians' efforts and hopes and channeled them into one specific direction. The occupation also spontaneously helped develop leaders, forcing them to play their natural role in the Egyptian political equation. This role, which is almost inherent in the Egyptian character, goes back to the Egyptians' Pharaonic roots.

So that no one would think that I am calling for a dictatorship or adopting the notion of a just autocracy--and these are ideas that did not occur to me at all--it would be appropriate for me to clarify this point to the reader. I think that Egypt can offer a unique example of accord between the notion of leadership and that of adopting democratic methods. Either a leader adopts democracy, or the notion of a leader is altered so that a leader becomes a symbolic figure

around whom the nation would rally. The obvious example of the first view may be seen in Sa'd Zaghlul, whereas the second view is exemplified in the first 5 years of King Faruq's reign. During those years the king's image was not tarnished, and his youth precluded his direct intervention in government. That period was the happiest period in the political lives of Egyptians because they felt there was general agreement over the nation's symbolic figure. The people were fond of the king, and they rallied around him. It is during such periods when a country has both a clear national cause and a leader or symbolic figure that one can find no trace for the religious political movement. During such periods one can easily find in the Egyptian character the creative resources for progress. These resources grow and develop under a highly keen sense of regional patriotism.

The question that is being asked on the political scene today as a challenge to Egyptian politicians may be this: What is the issue that could become the prototype of a national cause that would set the Egyptians' national feelings ablaze and help them rise above sectarian strife and appeals for reverting to the ways of our ancestors? How can we make Egyptians rally around a leader who is the product of a situation? How can we make them rally around a symbolic figure who is created by events? I do not claim to have the correct answer to this question. I am merely making it clear that what I am thinking is nothing more than an individual interpretation of the situation that I hope I will have the opportunity to present and discuss in another book. I do not wish to discuss it here because I do not wish to digress and talk about a secondary issue as far as the subject at hand is concerned, even though that issue is a fundamental one as far as Egyptian political life as a whole is concerned.

3. The Economic Crisis

If you were to ask where clusters of Muslims could be found in Cairo, you would be told to go to al-Marj or 'Izbah al-Nakhl in east Cairo or to al-Mansuriyah or Imbabah west of the city. No one would advise you to go to Shubra al-Khaymah or Shubra al-Mizallat in north Cairo or to Manshah Nasir or Hulwan in south Cairo. Most certainly no one will tell you to go to al-Zamalik or Misr al-Jadidah.

There is no mystery here: the explanation is quite simple. If you were to go east or west, you would find communities on the outskirts of Cairo that are growing in a haphazard manner. You would find yourself walking in areas that are extremely poor and extremely congested at the same time. You would not find a paved road or a straight street; nor would you find houses that are not very close to each other. You would also be shocked by the incredibly low level of services. Some areas have no electricity, and some of them--and you may believe this or not--have no water.

These areas are fertile ground for the revolutionary Islamic tendency whose supporters may be found there by the hundreds. It is in those areas that abject poverty comes into continuous contact with Cairo, where area residents go to study, to work or to take care of business. It is in the course of such daily contact that the contradiction between two different worlds that are worlds apart is reinforced. It is in that distance or gap between two different worlds that extremism grows.

Although the outskirts of the city in the north (Shubra al-Mazallat and Shubra al-Khaymah) and in the south (Manshah Nasir and Hulwan) share the same housing and services problems, religious extremism there does not emerge as an obvious phenomenon. The reason for this is that both areas are inhabited by blue collar communities that are clustered around a large group of large factories. Both areas are also full of craftsmen and owners of small workshops or their employees. Recently, all these groups of people achieved a higher income standard that has not become reflected on the basic aspects of their lives. Most of that additional income is being spent for personal enjoyment of one form or another. However, that additional income did eventually close a large part of that gap, even if only psychologically, and it created a barrier between these classes and religious extremism. It may have brought them closer to the far left than it did to religious extremism because the former is directly tied to their interests. It is pointless, of course, to talk about religious extremism in al-Jazirah Club, in Heliopolis Club, in al-Zamalik or in Misr al-Jadidah. And that in itself confirms the fact that there is a strong relationship between low income levels and a low standard of living on the one hand, and the growing tide of religious extremism on the other. The lower people's income levels and standards of living become, the higher the tide of religious extremism, and vice versa. Of course this phenomenon needs to be looked into more objectively and more carefully. I do hope researchers will have an opportunity to study the economic and social conditions of members of extremist organizations. I expect most of them will be students and not craftsmen; most of them will be people on fixed incomes and not people who earn high incomes or professionals; most of them will be residents of those areas that I mentioned, or residents of rural areas where economic conditions are similar to those described in the areas I mentioned.

4. Al-Sadat's Suicide

Al-Sadat's death was a human tragedy in every sense. The man released a demon from its confinement, thinking that he could control it and direct it to fight his Nasirist and leftist enemies. Al-Sadat even thought he could confine that demon again when he thought the time was right. But when that time came the demon turned against the man who had released him and struck him down in a moving scene that was shown on the media. It is that which makes the title of this section, which calls al-Sadat's death suicide, a truthful title and description of what happened to al-Sadat. It was suicide: nothing more and nothing less.

Despite the final scene in that tragedy, which ended in suicide, and its indications about how far the revolutionary Islamic tendency can go in its actions, what is even more important than analyzing that scene and looking into its consequences, is that we pause briefly to think about what al-Sadat did in his attempt to subdue that demon before that final scene. This is because the final scene came to an end when it was played out, but attempts to subdue the demon are continuing, and they are effective. In fact, they provide the principal support for the Islamic movement's three tendencies. The effect of these attempts to subdue the demon will continue for a long time.

Among its provisions the 1971 Constitution added for the first time the statement that the principles of Islamic law were a principal source of legislation

[in Egypt]. That provision is acceptable and logical because most civil laws are actually derived from the provisions of Islamic law. In an attempt to polarize people's feelings, however, al-Sadat held a public referendum before his death in 1981. Included in that referendum was a group of items that had nothing to do with each other. Voters had to vote yes or no on all of them together. Included among those items was one about amending the previous article and stipulating that the canonical law of Islam was the principal source for legislation [in Egypt]. That amendment which added the definite article, the, created much confusion for many people. Advocates of the immediate application of Islamic law used it to support their demand that the provisions of Islamic law be implemented without delay, without deliberation, all at once and even without discussion.

Because this subject is one that could be discussed extensively from the standpoint of jurisprudence--this is something I do not claim I can do, nor do I wish to embark upon it since I am concerned exclusively here with the political aspect--I will do no more than present what happened without making any comment. I will add to my account something else that al-Sadat did in the course of his attempts to subdue the demon. He announced that he believed in the fact that Islam was the religion of the Koran and the sword and that it is a religion and a state. This is a subject that has already been discussed in the second chapter of this book. But perhaps I should not conclude this discussion on suicide without mentioning a few well-known incidents that complete the picture and the view. It is no secret that Islamic groups in universities were first organized by state security investigation agents to oppose Nasirists and leftists. This was done with instructions from al-Sadat. It is also no secret that these groups won by a landslide in student elections that were held at the end of al-Sadat's life after he lost his control over them. That fact disturbed and worried al-Sadat. It is also known that he used to say quite often that Egypt was a country of knowledge and faith. Al-Sadat also used to make statements in front of his opponents like "Those who have no faith cannot be trusted" and "There is no place in the media for an atheist." May God have mercy on him. Despite everything that he did, he was directly responsible for a large part of that tendency's growth. In this respect, he did leave his successor a thorny road.

5. Democratic Permissiveness

It would be difficult to say that what is happening in Egypt is happening in a climate that is fully democratic. In fact, it would be closer to the truth to describe that climate as one of democratic permissiveness. The difference between the two is considerable. Permissiveness is a condition that is permitted by a ruler, but a democratic climate is binding on a ruler, and it limits the range of what he could do. Since the early seventies the Islamic movement benefited from the democratic permissiveness in Egypt: the permissiveness reinforced the movement's strengths, sheltered its weaknesses and reduced the possibilities of others opposing it. It is certain that none of this had been foreseen by those who permitted the democratic permissiveness to exist, but it did happen any way. For example, the traditional tendency was allowed to publish newspapers and magazines that in many cases tend to be extremist. These are magazines like AL-DA'WAH, AL-I'TISAM and AL-MUKHTAR AL-ISLAMI and newspapers like the Liberal Party's AL-NUR and the National Party's AL-LIWA' AL-ISLAMI.

Although some of these newspapers are affiliated with some political parties, including the ruling party, they are all ideologically related to the Islamic political movement and they all serve its purposes. There is no doubt that a newspaper without a party is much more powerful than a party without a newspaper. In the first case a newspaper can form a political party, and history shows us numerous examples of that. But a party without a newspaper is like a mute being, a conversation without sound and an expression without a face. One of the curious contradictions is the fact that never in all of Egypt's history and under the open climate of democracy before the fifties did a single political movement have so many newspapers and magazines supporting it as much as the Islamic political movement has under this limited measure of permissiveness.

The democratic permissiveness has also kept movements, like the Nasirist movement, which oppose the Islamic movement, out of the picture. In its battle with leftist tendencies this permissiveness concentrated on accusing people of atheism. It was thus reduced to pandering to religious feelings, and that disqualified and distracted it from the task of opposing the religious political tendency. It is certain that the Islamic political movement owes its apparent solidarity to this democratic permissiveness without which that movement's tendencies would have been numerous and divided among the Muslim Brothers, the Repudiation and Renunciation Society, al-Jihad Organization, those who support bringing everything to a standstill, followers of Sayyid Qutb and many others. The magnitude of the differences between these tendencies and each other is much greater than that between these tendencies and other political tendencies because members of these Islamic tendencies are quick to accuse each other of dissolution, depravity, atheism and apostasy. Making such charges comes easily to them, and that compels many people who hesitate to take a stand to play it safe and not get involved.

By forbidding the establishment of Islamic political parties this democratic permissiveness led supporters of the Islamic political movement to join the various existing parties. They formed pressure groups within those parties whose influence was much greater than it would have been had they come together in one competing party. It is under this permissiveness, which was set up as an alternative to a fully democratic climate to distract the people from that idea, that political leaders reiterated statements made by the traditional religious tendency, describing the state as Islamic and the regime in its entirety as faithful. It thus became difficult for any observer to find out exactly where the real difference was unless it had to do with individuals and not with principles. It is self evident that the fact that the official media towed that ideological line legitimized the methods of the Islamic political movement and that was a major gain, not to be compared with the legal loss of being denied official existence.

A gradual approach to democracy, or any approach that might be permitted in the foreseeable future, could be a suitable--even though we do not agree to that in principle--and a successful method for confronting political parties with democratic roots. These are the parties whose material existence comes to an end when they are denied legal existence. This approach, however, becomes counter-productive when used with religious political parties that have historically gone underground to pursue and practise their activities. These parties become

as strong as they can become when their political demands are mixed with religious appeals made under claims of persecution and complaints about the oppression suffered by the heralds of the faith. These are matters that collectively constitute an ideal rallying point that stirs the feelings of the young and impressionable who are disposed to extremism because of their age and who are ready for a confrontation because of conditions in society.

6. The Superpower and the Error of Making Analogies

Power supersedes argument and interests take precedence over principle: these are the rules of international politics. The United States of America, for example, does not plan its policy in the Middle East to achieve Egypt's interests even though Egypt is a friendly country. Instead, the United States plans its policy first and foremost, to achieve American interests. If Egyptian interests and American interests happen to coincide, that would be welcome and fortunate; but if they did not, then let the chips fall where they may. This is true of the United States, and it is also true of the Soviet Union. It is also true of the smallest countries. International relations ultimately develop as the product of this conflict of interests and its complex considerations. Moreover, what is even more important is that countries which adopt slogans about democracy, human rights and justice are basically concerned with the application of those principles within their own geographical borders. Outside those borders, these countries may cooperate with those regimes that commit the most flagrant violations of these principles, if such cooperation serves their interests.

I wanted this introductory paragraph to remove from people's minds the common illusion which holds that as long as the United States is Egypt's friend, it will "guarantee" the growth of democracy in the country. The United States will not allow religious extremists to gain the upper hand in Egypt if this is not in Egypt's short term or long term interests. First, I would like to remind the reader that I come to this discussion with no feelings of hostility toward the United States. Also, when I used the words "guarantee" and "will not allow", I did not mean to suggest that the United States had the power of making decisions in Egypt. To me this is inconceivable, and I also do not believe it. When I used those words I was merely presenting an erroneous point of view whose consequences are illogical. I would also like to make it clear that what I am outlining here does not constitute a convincing justification for the religious political movement's existence and power in Egypt and in the region, as much as it constitutes a possible hypothesis that may be justified by reasonable arguments or by mistrust. Now that I've made these preliminary remarks and reservations, let me shift to the subject [at hand] and ask, "Is the United States behind the growing religious political tide in the region?" Let me outline a logical view that seems to be alarmingly integrated.

The establishment of an Islamic government in Iran has rocked and shaken the political foundations of the entire Gulf area. The correlation between the continuing unrest and the lack of stability in the area is achieving some positive political and economical results for the United States. It would be self-evident if a cohesive line of defense would be formed behind the aforementioned area. The likely candidates for forming such a line of defense are Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt. If one were to add to that trio the organic ties

that exist between the United States and Israel, the combination could constitute an ideal arch of defense that could protect U.S. interests and oppose communist or even leftist penetration into the area.

The methods by which relationships between the superpowers and smaller countries develop have changed. It is no longer necessary for a superpower to have its forces occupy a country; nor is it even necessary for a superpower to have permanent military bases in a country. Military facilities make all that unnecessary. These military facilities are managed by natives and are ready for use when needed. They make direct methods of intervention that provoke national sentiments unnecessary. And it would not be objectionable at all for regimes to be imprecating world imperialism, American colonialism and the not-so-white White House day and night as long as strategic interests are protected and strategic objectives are achieved.

To go on with this hypothetical situation that we are outlining, we may say that the wealthy Islamic alternative seems to be the one most likely to achieve that objective. Sudan would have to apply the canonical laws of Islam so it could give the state the required Islamic character and framework--and that has actually happened. And Saudi Arabia would have to take calculated steps toward adopting a superficial democratic regime by presenting a constitution and forming an Islamic parliamentary council--and that has actually been announced. Finally, Egypt would come under some form of religious government: a religious framework would be adopted, and carefully calculated steps would be taken to give the state a religious character. These steps would begin with the application of the canonical laws of Islam, followed by the inevitable social limitations and restrictions--and that is actually going on. Only a few details would remain, and these could be solved in the foreseeable future. For example, there is a dispute with the traditional Islamic tendency over its position toward Israel--and that is almost the only basic subject of dispute; there is the search for an acceptable, civilian leader for this faction or that tendency; there is the matter of coordinating the roles of the aforementioned three countries; there is the agreement that will have to be reached over strategic objectives with those who are likely to achieve those objectives; and there is the matter of being certain about anticipated reactions over the long term.

In the short term, however, the outcome of such a hypothetical situation will definitely be favorable to the United States whose gains will include, most importantly, political stability in the area, particularly in Egypt. Religious extremists (the revolutionary tendency) will be undermined; the superficial aspects of applying the canonical laws of Islam will be achieved; and an Islamic national issue will have been created by stirring up people's feelings, mobilizing their efforts and directing their attention to the enemy. Nothing more would be done beyond the political mobilization of the people in the media. Thus, there would be no objections to a few attacks against Israel's backers, chief among whom is the United States, the Christian archenemy. There would be no objections to such attacks as long as military facilities are available and as long as the capitalist lobby controls the economies of the region.

Finally, fears about the future of minorities would be dealt with in friendly agreements that would preserve for these minorities some of their rights and

drive them to yoke their destiny with the United States as a way of showing their appreciation and safeguarding their future. And last but not least, the myth about possibilities for power in the region will come to an end, and the Arab dream will be shattered as leaders accuse each other of being hired agents, and the region regresses scores of years. If even a slight error is made in calculating the time framework for this possible hypothesis, its survival and stability will be at stake, and the military alternative will become the only available and possible alternative. Historically speaking, the United States has found it easier to deal with the military than with others.

All the foregoing is nothing more than a projection of what might happen as a result of the aversion to confront these tendencies' ideas or oppose them in the media. This hypothesis may be right or wrong. It may be a daydream to those who are fond of analyzing dreams, or it may be a disturbing nightmare, as I see it or interpret it. In all cases, it is the only time I hope I am wrong. If I am wrong, I hope that I am 100 percent wrong; but I do not think I am.

7. Conflict between the Wealthy and Radical Tendencies

The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran sparked conflict among the countries of the region: this was a conflict between the radical tendency, represented by Iran, and the wealthy Islamic tendency, represented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Iranian Revolution's success did to a large extent revive the hopes that supporters of the revolutionary Islamic tendency have about the possibility of gaining power by carrying out a violent and effective action that would then have to be supported by the political mainstream. The revolutionary Islamic tendency thinks that the inclinations and sentiments of the political mainstream are Islamic and that people in the mainstream are sufficiently oppressed to lend their support to figures who symbolize purity in a world of evil. It was no coincidence that the revolutionary tendency's first uprising took place in the holy city of Medina. Although government circles in Saudi Arabia were badly shaken by that incident, Saudi Arabia responded in kind and even raised the stakes: it lent Iraq its support in Iraq's war against Iran. Iran reacted by urging Shi'ites in the northeastern section of the kingdom to join forces with it.

In a region that is awash with Islamic movements it is logical, of course, for Saudi Arabia to have an opinion about what is happening and to be playing more than one role. At the very least, Saudi Arabia would pause long enough to reconsider the situation and re-evaluate these tendencies, particularly since Islam for Saudi Arabia is not merely a religious issue or an alternative. Islam for Saudi Arabia is an issue that deals with the very foundations of the regime's existence. I believe that Saudi Arabia has shifted its positions toward the three tendencies. It is rejecting the revolutionary tendency because it did not develop under its auspices. Because of its excessive idealism, Saudi Arabia is ruling out the revolutionary tendency as a model for proper Islamic application. But Saudi Arabia's relationship with the traditional tendency is one that fluctuates between friendship and caution. The traditional tendency is worthy of having friendly relations with Saudi Arabia because it is a moderate tendency. Some supporters of that tendency have not forgotten that Saudi Arabia gave them refuge and support when they were persecuted by Nasirists. At the same time these moderates are becoming more political, and that makes Saudi Arabia

wary of them. Political discussions would invariably lead to discussions about consultation in government and about government regimes, and these are areas of discussion that the Saudi regime considers off limits. It would be extremely dangerous for such a boundary to be crossed under Islamic auspices.

The only remaining tendency is the wealthy tendency. I will pause here to reflect upon this tendency and to wonder about the coincidence that brought it from Saudi Arabia with the funds that came from that country. Although this [relationship between the wealthy tendency and Saudi Arabia] cannot be confirmed, it raises many questions. If one is answered satisfactorily, another is not. If none of these questions is answered, then one would be ignoring a logical reason for the growth of the Islamic political tendency. And that has to do with the fact that both the wealthy and radical tendencies chose Egypt for staging the conflict each fears would take place in his territory.

8. Coalition Parties

Coalitions are set up by different political parties to oppose a common enemy or to achieve specific electoral objectives. It is rare for such coalitions to survive for long periods of time or to become the only means for exercising political activity, as was the case in Egypt when all political parties there became coalitions. It may be logical for the Grouping Party to represent a political coalition between various leftist forces. The Wafd may also have some excuse: the diversity of political tendencies in that party is part of its historical legacy. All national factions had joined forces under the Wafd's banner to oppose the occupation of Egypt. The Wafd party did not find it extraordinary at all for the ultra-right, represented by land owners, to join forces with the ultra-left, represented by the Wafd's vanguard and some Marxists, under the auspices of a party that was striving to achieve those objectives that everyone agreed about. The Egyptian people wanted independence, and they wanted the nation to be the source of authority. But the Wafd's leaders have added a new dimension to the [notion of a coalition]. It is unprecedented in the Wafd's history and constitutes a setback for the secular slogans that the party has clearly had from the time it was established till the outbreak of the revolution. I am talking about the alliance that the Wafd formed with the Muslim Brothers in the 1984 elections.

We may summarize the foregoing by saying that organizational considerations may be a logical and an acceptable explanation for someone wondering why the Grouping Party would set up a coalition. Historical considerations may also be the logical and acceptable answer for someone wondering why the Wafd would set up a coalition. But it would be difficult for anyone to accept the explanation for the Labor Party's coalition. The roots of that party go back to the Misr al-Fatah Movement [the party of young Egypt]. In addition to the Labor Party that coalition includes a Nasirist tendency and a few Muslim Brothers. Similarly, it would be difficult to accept the explanation for the Liberal Party's coalition, which includes an extremist liberal tendency, represented by AL-AHRAR, and an extremist religious tendency, represented by AL-NUR. It would also be difficult to accept the rationale behind the National Party's efforts to recruit some Nasirists into its pro-al-Sadat base.

Let me say that the only explanation for the foregoing is theoretical and subjective: it is the natural outcome of restrictions placed on efforts to establish political parties. Those restrictions prevented tendencies that are clearly

political from defining their distinct political identities by establishing parties with clearly defined and distinct ideological characteristics. That phenomenon, the phenomenon of coalition parties, had a direct effect on the growth of the religious political movement. Out of consideration for their alliances with religious tendencies, the clout of liberal and secular tendencies was diminished, and all the parties adopted religious premises out of consideration for the balance in these coalitions. That was most evident in the recent elections during which religious groups applied pressure on all political parties to make all of them proclaim religious slogans. Each party tried to outdo the other by calling for the immediate application of Islamic law and for turning Egypt into an Islamic, religious state. The only differences between these parties were in how vociferous and how unequivocal these protestations were.

We have learned that dialogue between different political tendencies leads to an agreement on minimum points of agreement. In Egypt's political climate, however, the exact opposite happens. As soon as adversaries meet in Egypt, they agree to disagree and to articulate their political differences. They always go back to their public with ideas that are more revolutionary and less prone to dialogue, ideas that are more closely associated with rejection than with agreement. To be more precise, they push those ideas down the public's throat. That was evident in the elections propaganda whose religious slogans affirmed that the candidates rejected existing conditions and stated that the alternative for the future will have to be Islamic and it will have to include the application of Islamic law. I do not believe that the three tendencies of the Islamic political movement could have dreamed of more than that.

9. Errors in Handling the Situation

The regime was not successful in handling the phenomenon of religious extremism. Instead of curbing the growth of the Islamic political movement, the regime's handling of that phenomenon inadvertently helped to promote it. The media, it was noticed, were very cautious about publishing articles by moderates or by those who wished to employ a rational approach to oppose religious extremism.¹ The media were extremely sensitive when they presented people who could conduct a religious dialogue in an enlightened manner without violating religious principles.² The media made unfortunate choices when it chose to put forward people who had been characterized as moderates but who turned out to confuse doctrine with their own personal religious or political opinions. At the same time it was extraordinarily incongruous that the regime reconciled with an extremist organization like al-Jihad by releasing all the defendants in one of the cases against that organization, and yet refused to amend the laws so as to allow a moderate tendency like the Muslim Brothers to participate in political activity. What was worse than all that is that, as far as the regime was concerned, an impression that was generally negative was created in the media. Sometimes, a positive impression was created about the Islamic political movement. The regime was seen as retreating, sometimes in a calculated manner, and

1. People like Mr Mustafa Mar'i and Zaki Najib Mahmud.

2. People like Husayn Amin and Sa'id al-'Ashmawi.

it was seen as taking actions to prohibit or permit activities for no reason. The regime was also perceived to be taking actions to comply with a protest made by some religious tendencies.

It is certain that the method which is being used to deal with this situation has to be changed radically so it can oppose terrorism decisively. This should be done by invoking the provisions of every day laws, not by overlooking them or turning to emergency laws. The laws should be clearly and spontaneously enforced against any infringements. The regime must also give up that balancing act which tends to confirm not eliminate division. The detention of Archbishop Shinudah should not be correlated with the ongoing trial in the case against al-Jihad. Nor should the release of all the defendants in one of the cases against al-Jihad organization set the stage for releasing Archbishop Shinudah. At the same time, all political movements, including religious tendencies, must be allowed to organize their own parties. People must also have access to the various media agencies to express different opinions and conduct an open discussion in which everyone would take part. There would be no undue hard feelings; facts would not be hidden; and no restrictions would be placed on debate. Our experience during the past years has shown that such restrictions have always been counterproductive.

10. Forbidden Areas of Discussion

Intellectuals in our Arab world bear a large responsibility for the continuing growth of the Islamic political movement. At the outset, they were the ones who defined those topics that could not be talked about or discussed. Some of these topics were historical and had to do with incidents in Islamic history; some were political and had to do with the reality of political life in countries that apply what is claimed to be an Islamic system; and some were ideological topics, such as issues about the separation of religion and politics and issues of national unity. Arab intellectuals withdrew even further as the revolutionary Islamic tendency grew; they withdrew because they feared the future and they preferred to play it safe, particularly since some of them who had attempted to discuss some secondary issues like purdah for women and some Islamic laws, were libeled, attacked and even insulted by religious extremists and moderates. But all of this in my judgment does not give our intellectuals an acceptable excuse for bowing out of the discussion and withdrawing even further every day from the debate. Nor does it give them an excuse for continuing to maintain their silence in the face of what they believe to be proper or choosing not to act to oppose what they believe to be wrong.

Finally, all the foregoing was a personal effort to shed light on a situation: it may be wrong, and it may be right. It is any way an attempt to explain what I believe in principle to be a historical dilemma; it is an attempt to clarify what may not be obvious. I undertook that attempt without considering the critical remarks or attacks that may be made against me. Nor did I consider feelings of animosity that may result from this effort. I ignored these considerations because I believe that dialogue is the only way out of this dilemma. I believe that words may sometimes prevent bullets from being fired because words are, of course, more powerful and definitely more lasting.

About the Author

Faraj 'Ali Fudah was born in al-Zarqa, Damietta on 20 August 1945. He earned a B.S. in agriculture in June 1967 and an M.S. in agricultural sciences (agricultural economics) in April 1975. He also earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from 'Ayn Shams University in December 1981. His dissertation topic was "The Economics of Guiding the Use of Irrigation Water in Egypt."

In 1982 he published the book, "Al-Wafd wa al-Mustaqbal" [The Wafd and the Future]. He worked as an instructor in the College of Agriculture at 'Ayn Shams University and then as an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture in Baghdad. After that he served as an economics expert in some international firms.

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Books in print: "Al-Suqut" [The Fall]; and "Hiwar hawla al-'Ilmaniyah" [A Discussion on Secularism]

[Author's Epilogue]

Dear reader, this is a book that deliberately addresses your mind and purposefully disturbs your thoughts. It broaches areas of discussion that were said to be forbidden, but I do so because I realize that the human mind was not created to be degraded. I also realize that the country's future is not to be toyed with by politicians who are wearing religious habits and who have always dreamed of power.

Never mind that the book depressed you! The depression I felt is much greater than the depression you feel. No harm will come to you if you felt that some people have woven a web of deception around you. I have come to that realization too. And you will not be blamed if you were to grieve for Egypt. Like you, I am grieving. I am grieving, but I thank God now and forever that this book brought us together before the fall.

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